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IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING AND OTHER STORIES



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***SUNSHINE AND SHADOW
SERIES***

**AFTER LONG YEARS AND OTHER
STORIES.**

**IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING AND
OTHER STORIES.**

**IN THE HEART OF THE FOREST AND
OTHER STORIES.**



"Pardon me, worthy majesty, this is my father and this is my mother."

—From *In the Service of the King*
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SUNSHINE AND SHADOW SERIES

IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING

AND

OTHER STORIES

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE GERMAN BY

SOPHIE A. MILLER

AND

AGNES M. DUNNE

Principal Public School 165, New York City



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NOTE

The ethical stories in the **SUNSHINE AND SHADOW SERIES** have been translated from the German with the view of instilling into the minds of youthful readers such truths as will help materially toward building a character that will withstand the trials and temptations of life.

It is conceded by educators that ethics presented in the lecture form fails of its purpose; therefore the writers have presented this subject in the form most appealing to children—the story.

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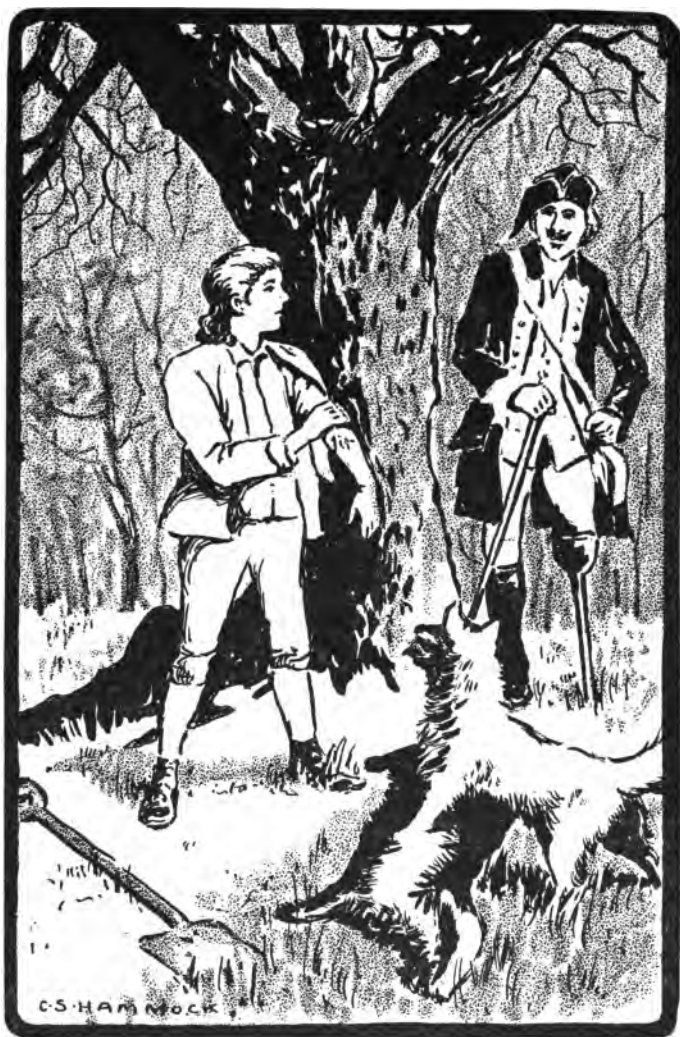
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IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING

CHAPTERS.

- I. THE MEETING.
- II. HIS AMBITION.
- III. THROUGH THE SWAMP.
- IV. THE BANQUET.



"But now the boy's arm began to pain and swell."

IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING

CHAPTER I

THE MEETING

At one time there lay at the foot of the Schleswig Mountains a quaint little village, surrounded on all sides by a beautiful, fruitful valley. Of the many houses, one was conspicuous, on account of its little low thatched roof and homelike, inviting appearance.

The occupants were poor people. The household was small, consisting of father, mother and one son, whom the parents had named Frederick, in honor of their greatly beloved King, Frederick the Great. Mr. Kammer, the father, supported the members of his family by manual labor. They were perfectly satisfied with their lot in life and were thankful for their daily bread, the supply of which had always been plentiful. They did not envy the wealthy. Contentment had made them feel equally rich; so that they never longed for anything beyond their own meagre possessions.

One sunny morning in early fall, Mrs. Kammer sat at her cottage door preparing some vegetables for the mid-day meal. By the cheery smile which played over her countenance, one could judge how pleased she was with this year's crop.

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But her smile grew even brighter, as the cottage door was suddenly thrust open from within, and a tall, handsome boy stepped out upon the porch and hurried toward her. It was Frederick, her son, who loved his parents so well that, although he had passed his twelfth year, he had never given them any occasion to reprimand him for disobedience or carelessness. How his parents loved him—their hearts and lives were bound up in his, and had he been taken from them, it would have been a crushing blow.

“Dear mother, may I go now?” said he.

“Where, Frederick?”

“To the woods, mother. Didn’t father tell you?”

“Not a word. What do you want to do there?”

“I want to gather nuts,” said Frederick, standing ready to go. But his mother said: “You had better stay here and keep me company.”

Frederick gazed at his mother in surprise, and all the brightness faded from his face. Then, after a moment’s hesitation, he said: “You are only teasing me.”

“No, no, I am in earnest.”

“But mother, I do want to gather some nuts.”

“Come, come,” continued his mother, “put that idea out of your mind, and help me with these vegetables.”

The thought of giving up the jaunt upon which he was so bent, pained him sorely; but without

another word, he entered the house and soon returned with a dish and a knife.

"Does it grieve you, my boy, to give up the trip?" asked his mother, as Frederick seated himself beside her and silently helped her.

"Certainly, dear mother," answered Frederick. "But you do not wish me to go."

"Not at all, my dear child. I just wished to prove your obedience, and you have stood the test well. The son who foregoes his own pleasure in compliance to his parent's wish, is a good son; and I am proud to say that you are such a boy. Run along now, Fred; and take your dog with you. Do you hear?"

"Yes, mother. How good you are!" shouted Frederick, as he bounded forth with his dog.

As his mother watched him, she raised her eyes, filled with love and dim with tears, to Heaven and thanked God for the possession of a good, dutiful child, a parent's greatest blessing.

The sun had now cast its golden rays over the earth, and pictured in shadowy outlines the trees, the houses and mountains. All nature beamed with light and grandeur.

Frederick soon reached the first hill. He hastened up the ascent while the dog bounded ahead, his barks re-echoing again and again, telling of the joy which this morning walk was affording him. But when he reached the edge of the forest, Frederick called his dog, and by word and look

cautioned him to be quiet and remain close at his master's side. The wise dog obeyed the orders strictly and only snuffed the ground.

At last the desired spot was reached. Frederick threw his stick and hat upon the ground and began gathering nuts, which he dropped into the bag slung over his shoulder. The dog, meanwhile, was busy sniffing here and there. All at once he found an opening in the ground and dashed into it. Several minutes passed. Soon loud barks and squeaks gave proof that the dog had encountered some animal, and that both were in conflict. Frederick called loudly to the faithful dog to come out; but his own barking made him deaf to every other sound.

Suddenly, all was still, and Frederick feared for the life of his dog. But no! A scramble, a shuffle, and out jumped a badger. It sprang at Frederick, bit him in the arm, and then ran on, followed by the dog. The hound overtook it at the edge of the forest, where he pounced upon the wild animal and ended the life of his enemy. In a moment, Frederick followed, regardless of his wound, and reached the spot just as the badger breathed its last. The dog laid himself breathless at his master's feet, who stroked him gently and praised him for his fearlessness.

But now the boy's arm began to pain and swell. He rolled up his sleeve and tied his handkerchief

around the arm, without uttering one word of pain or complaint.

"Spitz," said he to his dog, "how shall we carry this badger home? It is so heavy that I certainly cannot lift it with my wounded arm."

He tried to raise the animal on his shoulder, but all his efforts were vain.

"It is impossible," said he, as he gazed at the fat badger. "We must get some one to help us."

"The help has already arrived," said—not Spitz—but the deep voice of a man who had been for some time watching the boy's efforts, and just then made his appearance.

Frederick gazed in astonishment at the man, who seemed to have fallen from the sky. He was old. A gray moustache hid his mouth and gave him a cross look, which was softened somewhat by the mild expression which beamed from his dark eyes. He wore the uniform of a Prussian grenadier, and on his coat lapel there gleamed a gold medal. Weapons he had none; and as Frederick surveyed him from head to foot, he felt sorry for the old soldier; for the latter had lost a leg and was hobbling about on a wooden one.

"I hope you are not afraid of me, my boy," said the old soldier, laughingly. "You look at me with your big eyes as if you had never seen a soldier before. Come nearer to me, my lad. Any one who shows such friendship and kindness as

you have just shown for your dog, will find me a true friend."

He then extended his hand to Frederick, who took it without hesitation, and shook it with a hearty pressure.

"How did you get here?" inquired the boy. "I did not hear you, or see you, and I was frightened when you stood before me so suddenly."

"I believe you," said the soldier, "for you were too busy, first with your dog, and then with your wounded arm. I liked you at once, because your first thought was for your dog, and your last, for yourself. You are a nice boy, so I am going to carry this badger to your home for you."

"That is very kind of you," said Frederick; "but it may take you out of your way."

"What is the name of your village?" questioned the stranger.

"Zettwitz, and if you will step a few feet this way, you can see my house in the valley below."

"Zettwitz? You live in the village of Zettwitz? That's good," said the soldier, "for that is where I want to go. I simply missed the footpath here in the woods. Yes, there lies the little village. How my old heart beats, as I look at it again after so many years of absence. There rises the high church tower and yonder the majestic lindens, in whose grateful shade I spent so many hours of my boyhood. However far one may wander, the heart always yearns to return

to the place where it felt its first joys and first sorrows. Welcome, my dear village! The sight of you fills my soul with joy and peace."

The old soldier became silent, and gazed with misty eyes at the village which had just brought myriads of pleasant memories to his mind. He removed his cap, folded his hands, and raised his eyes to Heaven. A silent prayer of thanks arose to his Creator. His lips trembled; one tear, and then another, trickled down his gray beard.

Mastering himself quickly, he replaced his cap, and drawing Frederick to his side, said: "My dear boy, you do not yet know what it means to see your beloved country after long years of separation. See, my old heart that never quivered at the cannon's mouth, or in the thunder of battle, or when my comrades fell at my side, now trembles with longing as I gaze once more on my boyhood's home. Do you see that little cottage with its low thatched roof and vine-clad walls? That is my birthplace."

"That house there was your home?" asked Frederick.

"Yes, my dear boy, that was my home."

"Why, that is my home, too," cried Frederick. His cheeks glowed, his eyes glistened, his heart leaped with joy.

"What is your father's name?" cried the soldier, as he stretched out his arms to embrace the lad.

"Frederick Kammer; and so is mine."

"Good," shouted the old man, as he pressed the boy to his breast; "then you must be my nephew; I am your mother's brother, Conrad."

"Uncle Conrad," shouted Frederick joyously, and covered the moustached mouth of the old soldier with many kisses.

"How happy my mother will be when we reach home. I can't wait a minute longer. Hurry down the mountain-side. My, my, how happy mother will be!"

Frederick took his uncle by the arm and tried to drag him forward without giving one thought to the badger.

Uncle Conrad, however, resisted, and said in his deep bass voice, "Gently, gently, my boy, and don't forget that my wooden leg cannot go so fast; besides, we must not forget our booty."

Frederick calmed his impatience and turned back to help his uncle lift the heavy badger upon his shoulder. Then they hurried down the mountain-side, as quickly as the old soldier could go. In less than half an hour they reached the village.

Frederick wanted to tell every one he met that this was his Uncle Conrad; but he was stopped by a warning finger. "I want the joy of surprising everybody myself. I have been picturing this scene in my thoughts all the way here from Berlin. But, if you shout out the news, it will reach your mother's ears before we get home.

Therefore, be still, my lad. The people in the village will learn soon enough who owns the old wooden leg that's hobbling at your side."

Frederick listened and obeyed; but he quickened his pace, for impatience seemed to have fastened wings to his feet. Uncle Conrad jogged along, hardly noticing the big drops of perspiration that fell from his brow, for the longing for home and sister drove him onward.

When they reached the house, the old soldier took a long breath and waited a moment to recover from the rapid walk. Then he threw the badger upon the ground and stepped into the house. At the sight of his sister, he shouted in trembling tones, "Gretchen, sister, at last I see you again, strong and well."

"Brother Conrad," she cried, and the next moment found herself in the strong arms of her brother. The joy of the re-union brought tears to their eyes. Mr. Kammer and his son stood by sharing the rapture. At last, Mr. Kammer stepped toward his brother-in-law, shook his hand heartily, and said with deep emotion: "Welcome, a thousand times welcome to your father's house. You must never leave it again."

"No, brother, never again. I have grown old and gray, and my wooden leg refuses to carry me far. Through the kindness of my beloved King, I have been pensioned, so that I can live with you without lessening the little that you have. I bring

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you a heart full of love, and if you receive me with love, then with God's will nothing shall again divide us."

These words were welcomed with shouts of joy. Frederick leaped with satisfaction, for his old uncle had won his entire devotion. The boy drew out the aged grandfather's chair, and offered it to the veteran, relieved him of his hat and cane, and would not rest till his uncle had every comfort the little cottage afforded.

An entirely new life opened for Frederick, now that his Uncle Conrad had become a member of the household. The old soldier knew how to tell many a fascinating story of his military life, to which Frederick gave an attentive ear. His uncle had enlisted with the Austrians against the Turks; and later he had entered the Prussian service, where he had fought with great honor. The stories awakened intense interest in Frederick's heart. He longed to be able to fight for his country and his King, and win the same honor and renown that his uncle had achieved. His eyes danced at the very thought of it.

"I must do all this for my country, too," cried Frederick.

After pondering these thoughts, he said to his parents one day, "Father, mother, do let me become a soldier."

The father only laughed, and said: "When the time comes, we shall see. At present, you are too

young and too weak; and perhaps many a year may pass before you will be able to handle a musket."

His mother shook her head, and said sadly: "Frederick, could you possibly think of leaving your mother who loves you so dearly? You are my only child, and if a bullet should pierce your heart, I should die of grief."

Such words as these extinguished the fire in Frederick's heart. He would creep slyly up to his mother, and say: "No, mother, I will not forsake you. I will not cause any sorrow for you, nor will I let any act of mine bring tears to your eyes."

Then his mother would laugh and hug him close to her side and press a kiss upon his warm cheek. The old uncle would laugh, too, and although no word escaped his lips, he thought to himself: "Just let the time come when this weak boy has grown to be a strong man; neither father nor mother can hold him back when the sound of the trumpet and the waving flag of his country call him to honor and glory. He will be a general some day. I read it in his eye whenever I tell him a story of the battlefield."

Thus mused Uncle Conrad, but in his kindness he kept his thoughts to himself and saved the gentle mother any untimely care and worry.

At eventide, however, the stories were again related, and again did the old man see the true

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soldier spirit in his nephew. Little by little, Conrad tried to incline Frederick's parents to his way of thinking. Meanwhile, he employed the time in training his nephew in every detail of military tactics which his long service and experience in the army had taught him. Under his guidance, Frederick became so practised in handling the musket that he could have entered the army at any moment.

Frederick paid such strict attention to his uncle's instruction and was such a diligent scholar, that the old uncle found the greatest pleasure in teaching him.

The gray-haired old soldier grew young again and was thankful for the day that had brought him back to his fatherland and to his beloved nephew. As for Frederick, he would have gone through fire and water for his uncle.

CHAPTER II

HIS AMBITION

Many years had now passed and the boy had become a young man. The soldier play had long since ended and he was obliged to help his father daily in the fields. He worked industriously, but it was plain that his heart was not in his work. His old uncle comforted him and urged him to be patient and diligent.

Each evening the talk, as usual, reverted to the battlefield. Frederick hung spellbound on each word, and often would sigh: "O uncle, if I could only be a soldier."

"Foolish boy," said his uncle, reprovingly. "In times of peace a soldier's life is dull and stupid. Have patience. I hear rumors from all sides of dissatisfaction among the neighboring countries; and you'll see, before we know it there will be war. Not that I wish it. No, indeed, for war is a bad condition for all concerned. But understand me, Frederick, before I should want my King to submit to disgrace, I would rather have him fight in order to maintain his respect."

Frederick listened attentively and agreed with his uncle. Thus passed another year. Suddenly the news reached the little village that the great

King Frederick had seized some neighboring territory and that a war was on. The King had learned that his neighbors had been false to their vows, and so he had shown them at once that they could not play such tricks with him.

This news pierced Frederick's heart like a thunderbolt. He grew pale and red by turns as these words unconsciously escaped his lips: "Now, I must go and fight for my King."

His uncle looked at him with gleaming eyes and nodded assent. His mother, however, grew deathly pale, placed her hand upon her heart, as if a great pain had seized her there, and tearfully said: "I have feared this for a long time."

Mr. Kammer, meanwhile, sat calmly by, and said: "Let us first be sure that all this talk is well founded. I hardly believe it; for our King is too careful to do anything rash."

"Be silent," he said to Frederick, who was about to speak. "Say no more on this subject, and do not cause your mother unnecessary pain. You, too, Conrad, be still. I know well that you side with the boy; but he shall not leave this house. He is our only child, and we did not rear him to be a target for the enemy's cannon ball."

"But," said Conrad, "if your son should become a general, see what honor it would bring you."

"Silly talk about generalship," grumbled Mr. Kammer. "He has his daily bread. What more

does he need? Let me hear no more of your war schemes."

"But listen, dear father," said Frederick pleadingly, "I can rest no longer. My brave companions are fighting for their King and their fatherland; while I, who am as young and strong as they, must remain here wielding the spade, instead of shouldering the gun. It grieves me to look on, when I should take part."

"To be shot down," retorted the father, angrily. "I am growing old and weak, and if you should fall in battle, who would care for the poor parents who have looked to you for comfort in their old age. Could you deliberately bring care and sorrow to your mother's heart, and fill her life with misery and poverty? Truly, boy, if these are your intentions, you are no son of mine."

Frederick stood before his father, deeply impressed, a picture of sadness and disappointment. Tears filled his eyes and his mouth trembled. Suddenly he controlled himself, and forcibly thrust aside the burning wish of his heart and soul that called him to deeds of courage and heroism.

"You are right, father," said Frederick, sadly but self-contained, "my life belongs to you and my mother. I will never leave you."

With the last word, his voice broke, and pain conquered him. He left the house hastily, sought a secluded spot in the woods, and there cried out the grief of his blighted hopes.

Uncle Conrad's eyes followed him pityingly, and then he said: "Brother, sister, your boy will grieve himself sick, if you do not let him carry out the wish of his heart. He is a born soldier, and you will realize your mistake only when it is too late."

"But, brother," cried Mrs. Kammer, "how can you blame us for wanting to guard our only child."

"Guarding your only child," murmured Conrad. "Do you mean to say that you would be sending him to his grave when you send him to war? If every bullet had hit the mark, there would now be no soldiers in the world."

"But, I say he shall not go," continued the father, earnestly. "Were our country in great danger, I would talk differently, for we ought willingly to offer our all for our God, our country and our King. But at present, our King is not in need of soldiers. Mother and I have greater need of the boy than the King. Furthermore, I do not wish to discuss the matter any longer."

At these words, a great weight fell from the mother's heart, and she breathed a sigh of relief. But old Conrad, who was a soldier heart and soul, shook his old gray head, refilled his big pipe and hobbled out of the house without another word. When he reached the open, he seated himself under a tree, thought for a few moments, puffed clouds of smoke into the air, smiled oc-

casionally, and then wrinkled his brow and mumbled a few inaudible words into his moustache.

Suddenly he said aloud: "That boy must be a soldier"; and he stamped the ground with his wooden foot. "I will see to it that no one dares to hinder him. But where is he now? Perhaps he has gone up the mountain. The air is cool and the distance not very great. I will follow him."

The old man arose, tapped his pipe against the tree, put it empty into his pocket and started forth. On the way, he met some neighbors and asked them if they had seen Frederick. He learned that the boy had really gone up the mountain.

"Well, I'll find him there," said Uncle Conrad, as he continued his way.

Arriving at the summit, he paused and listened. A deep sigh reached his ear, and he hurried in the direction whence it came. There in the bushes lay Frederick. His head was buried in his hands. So deeply was he lost in thought that he never felt his uncle's presence, till the latter touched him on the shoulder, and said: "Don't be silly, Fred. No tree falls at the first blow of the ax; and he who loses all hope when the first rough wind blows in his face, will never become anything worth while in his whole life."

"But, dear uncle, all my hopes are gone," said Fred sadly. "You heard what my father said; and when he speaks in such decided tones, no per-

son in the world can bend his will. No, uncle, it's all over with me. I shall have to be a farmer all my life, instead of winning laurels in the Prussian army."

"I'll tell you," said his uncle, as Frederick quickly brushed away a tear, "if I were you, I would pack my clothes, take my savings and whatever I can give you besides, leave the town in the dead of night, and walk till I reached the army. Do you understand? That's what I would do. Show your father and mother that, now you are full grown, you can stand on your own feet and decide for yourself." For a few moments, Frederick's eyes gleamed with hope and triumph, as his old uncle offered the suggestion about which he had been secretly thinking. But in an instant the light faded from the boy's eyes as his better self arose and mastered him.

"No, uncle," said he, earnestly and steadfastly. "I will not deceive my father and mother by secretly leaving their house, and contrary to their wishes, enrolling myself under the banner of the King. Such a deed would bring no blessing with it; and the knowledge of my deceit would follow my every step. As I had proved a bad son, I should also prove a bad soldier. No, uncle, he who does not honor his father and his mother can not expect any good to result from it."

"Frederick," said the uncle, as he stared at the youth in astonishment, "perhaps you are right,

and much wiser than your old uncle. At any rate, don't worry, and when the time comes, the way will be pointed out. Not all days are cloudy; and the war has only just begun."

Frederick accepted this bit of comfort. His clear thoughts and cheery disposition soon helped him to conquer the defeat which had threatened to crush him. He chatted with his uncle a little while longer about the enemies with whom his great King was in conflict. He laughed at his uncle, whose partisanship let him find nothing good in the enemy.

"The Prussians, however," said the uncle, his eyes blazing, "the Prussians are the real, true heroes. But, let us lose no time, for the sun is fast declining and your parents await us at home."

Frederick sprang to his feet, quickly assisted his uncle to rise, and together they walked down the mountain-side and through the village to their home, where they had been anxiously awaited. Silently they seated themselves at the table which had been spread for them, and ate their simple evening meal without alluding to the war or to Frederick's blighted hopes. When the meal was over, Frederick withdrew to the solitude of his own room, for his heart was overflowing and he feared he might not be able to hide his feelings.

Sadly the father's eyes followed his son. Shaking his head questioningly, he said: "I fear

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we shall have a difficult time with our boy. I never saw him act as he has done to-day." The old uncle shrugged his shoulders and mumbled in his beard: "It's your own fault. Why do you hinder the boy? He is a born soldier. But have patience. What God sends is right, and if it be God's will that Fred shall be a soldier, nothing you may do can hinder it. Good night." He arose and hobbled into his room.

The Kammers, too, soon retired for the night. Many hours passed before they fell asleep—for sad thoughts disturbed them. Willingly would they have granted their son's wish, had not the pain of parting, the long separation and the threatening dangers of war acted as a powerful barrier.

At last, soothing sleep came like a gentle angel and veiled all their bitter and painful thoughts, till these faded into sweet forgetfulness.

CHAPTER III

THROUGH THE SWAMP

The winter was now ushered in, and with it the news of the many battles which the Prussians had won. The villagers received the welcome news with joy and merrymaking. Frederick alone was sad and dissatisfied, because he had had no share in serving his country. Pale and dejected, he went about, and although he uttered no words of his hidden pain or secret wishes, everybody could plainly read his patient suffering. He did his daily tasks, but his heart was not in his work.

His mother noticed his pallor with fear; but like her son she, too, kept silent, lest a word might kindle fire in Frederick's heart. The father also said nothing.

Uncle Conrad, however, used every occasion to utter his opinion. Then he would retreat to the garden, where he would puff away at his old pipe as if, in his anger, he wished to envelop the whole world in smoke.

Mr. Kammer saw him smoking and puffing. "I don't care," said he, "I will keep to my word, even if Conrad puffs away a pound of tobacco a day."

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Meanwhile, no word, no complaint, no pleadings escaped Frederick's lips, as he tried to choke his grief and hide his pain from his parents. This seemed to him like winning a battle, and in it he found his only comfort.

Suddenly, the Prussian and Austrian soldiers began to draw closer and closer toward the little village which had been left undisturbed so long. It appeared as if the end of the war were not far distant, and that here, in this quiet section of the country, the final blow would be struck.

One day Frederick rushed into the house, half breathless, and told how the roar of the cannon could be heard from the valley on the other side of the mountain.

Mr. Kammer looked doubtful, for he had not dreamed that the soldiers had drawn so near to his homestead.

Just at this moment, the old uncle entered the house and fully supported Frederick's words, saying, "I don't think it will be much of a battle, for the sound of the firing was too weak. I think, Fred, we had better climb the mountain and see what is going on in the valley on the other side."

These words sounded the boy's secret wish, and without hesitation he showed his willingness to accompany his uncle.

The mother was about to forbid him, when the father gave his permission. He whispered quickly to his wife that the very best medicine to cure

their son of his longing to take part in the war, was to let him see a battlefield at close range. "His dreams will soon vanish like the mist, and our boy will be glad that he remained at home with us."

To these words the mother could raise no objections, but she turned to her brother pleadingly, and said: "Keep a watchful eye over my boy."

Frederick walked gaily at the side of his uncle, while his heart beat quicker at each sound of the cannon. Suddenly, he expressed the fear that perhaps it would all be over before they would reach the mountain top.

"Not so, my boy," replied Conrad; "for the section of country where I think the forces have met, is full of obstacles. The end won't come as quickly as you think. First let us get to the top and view the situation, and then we can decide."

In less than a quarter of an hour they had reached the outermost point of the mountain, and were looking searchingly into the valley below, where the Prussian and Austrian soldiers were in conflict.

Although the smoke rose in thick volumes and clouded the scene, from time to time they saw the Prussian infantry press forward toward the center of the enemy's ranks; but each time it was brought to a stand-still by heavy firing. Noisier grew the roar of battle, and more intense grew the dangers.

"Uncle!" cried Frederick, whose eyes and cheeks seemed afire, "why don't the Prussian cavalry hurry around the edge of the woods, through the swamp, and attack the enemy from the rear. In a minute, they could silence the deadly batteries. I cannot understand how this trick should escape the notice of the Commander-in-Chief."

"Probably they did try it," responded the uncle, thoughtfully, "but it failed; for the way through the swamp is hard to find, and few there are in this region who know it. Truly, my boy, if your plan could be carried out, the battle would be decided in our favor in less than a half hour."

"Then, uncle, I must go down and tell the Commander-in-Chief. See, our infantry is retreating. The day will certainly be lost for our men. I must go to them."

"You must stay here, at my side," said his uncle. "I promised your mother to guard you."

"But look," cried Frederick, and before the old uncle could turn, Frederick had started down the mountain-side, and was running straight toward a group of riders led by the Commander-in-Chief.

Frederick stopped for a moment to get his breath, then he approached the Commander, seated upon a majestic horse whose blazing eyes and dilated nostrils showed his fiery spirit. From time to time, it stamped the ground, impatient of

delay. The Commander-in-Chief turned to give orders and Fred could see in his every movement that he was stern and determined. He was no longer young, but somewhat bent and weak. His face was wrinkled, but the fire of youth beamed from his eyes. Fred drew back as he felt the glance fall upon himself.

“Who are you?” asked the Commander-in-Chief, in short and decisive tones. “What are you doing here?”

Frederick mastered himself in a moment, stepped closer to the rider, drew his cap off respectfully, and said: “Sir, I wish to offer you a suggestion.”

“Then speak quickly, for I haven’t a moment to spare.”

In a few words Frederick told him what he had noticed from the mountain top and begged him to send part of his cavalry by the way that led to the rear of the enemy’s forces.

The Commander-in-Chief gazed at the youth in great astonishment.

“Who taught you that the attack from the rear decides the battle?” asked he.

“Why, my eyes suggested that—and besides I am sure because my old uncle who served under the King for many years, agrees with me.”

“Yes, yes, the thought is a good one,” said the rider, nodding his head in assent, “and it would have been carried out, were it not for that great

obstacle—the swamp. Horses and riders would perish in it.”

“If you will grant me permission to lead,” cried Frederick eagerly, “I will forfeit my head, if in less than one quarter of an hour the cavalry does not stand at the enemy’s rear.”

The Commander-in-Chief surveyed the youth from head to foot, and asked: “Have you ever served in the army?”

“Not yet,” responded Frederick, depressed by the question, “but I would like to serve our great King. My parents, however, won’t permit me.”

“We shall see,” said the Commander kindly, and patted Frederick on the shoulder. “I will trust you and you shall lead the cavalry.”

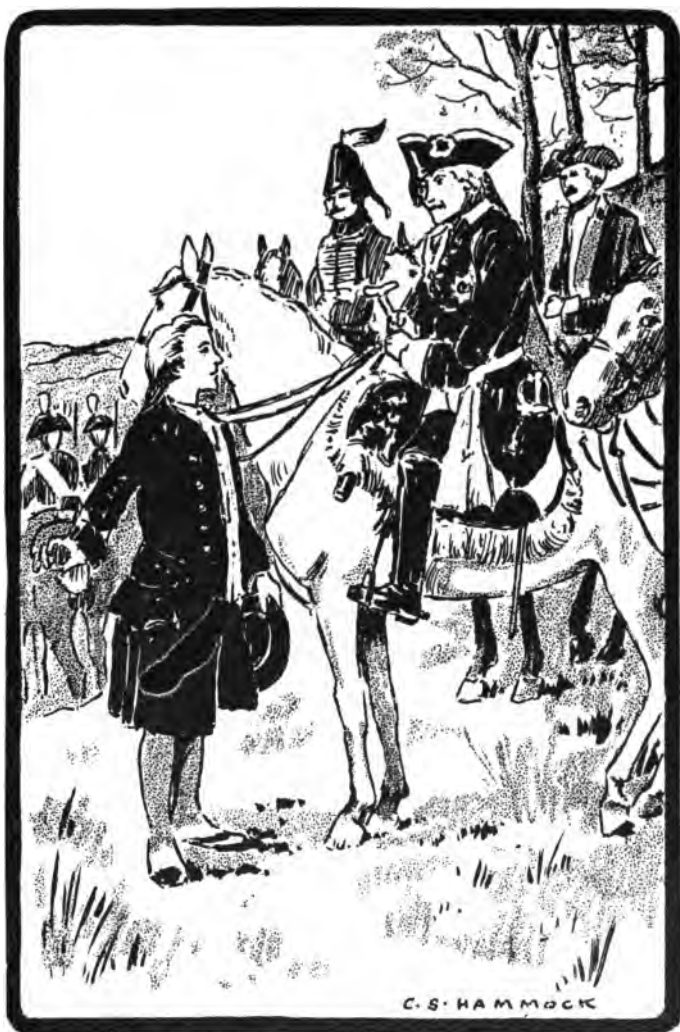
“Adjutant Redder, dismount and give your horse to this youth. Major Sitko, carry a message to General Klay to assemble half of the cavalry to the left of this wooded section.” Then, turning to Frederick, he asked: “Can you ride?”

“Many a wild colt I have trained.”

“Then mount and keep close to my side.”

Frederick obeyed promptly and patting the neck of the beautiful fiery steed, reined it with a firm hand, as it began to prance. He proceeded slowly, keeping a watchful eye on the movements of both armies.

The Austrians kept their solid ranks and no effort of the Prussian affected them, as they added regiment upon regiment to their vast numbers.



**“Frederick told him what he had noticed from the
mountain top.”**

"It is certainly time now for the cavalry to move to the rear of the enemy, or the day will be lost for us," said the Commander-in-Chief. "Now, my boy, ready—March!"

"But—without a sword?" asked Frederick.

"You are right, I am glad you thought of it. Lend him your sword, Major Klutz. The boy won't ruin it. Remember, my lad, don't leave the field until you have spoken to me again. I wish to know more of you; and now, be off."

With a smile and a gentle swing of the hand, the Commander-in-Chief waved his adieu, while Frederick with a military salute rushed forward over the field to the spot where the cavalry, assembled under General Klay, awaited him.

"But," said General Klay thoughtfully, "are you sure of the way, my son? Our success to-day depends on your leadership."

"Trust me, General Klay," said Frederick respectfully, removing his cap. "I know every step of the way, and will lead your troops so that the horses will pass through the worst part of the swamp without sinking into it farther than their knees."

Frederick's honest expression filled the grizzled old general with trust. He gave the necessary orders, rode with Frederick to the end of the field, and with a rush they entered the swamp, the cavalry close behind.

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Frederick had not promised too much. In most of the places the swamp barely covered the horses' hoofs, and in the worst, only their knees. Before a half hour had passed, the cavalry halted in the rear of the Austrians, who, depending on the impassable swamp, and fearing no attack from the rear, had left this wing unprotected.

Fred quickly whispered to the general: "Now the battle will be ours."

"Yes, my son, with God's help," answered the general. "But you must stay behind, and I will give the signal for the attack."

"If you would permit me, I should like to remain at your side," implored Frederick, with gleaming eyes. "Many a year I have longed to fight for my country and my King."

"Brave boy, I see you do not wish to do things by halves. Well, then, forward with me."

The fire of the old general was soon communicated to his men. Each soldier recognized the importance of this attack, and felt that he would rather die than retreat from the battlefield. The trumpets blared; the command of the officers echoed with lightning rapidity; each regiment pressed forward toward the center of the enemy's ranks; while the other half of the Prussian army attacked it from the front. Every line that had seemed motionless, was now set moving. The cannon balls flew over the battlefield. The enemy had been surprised, and its greater numbers were

now of little avail, for the attack from both sides was powerful. The drawn swords in the rear prevented retreat. In an instant panic reigned and no orders were regarded. In less than five minutes the battle was over.

Thousands of the enemy were taken prisoners, many perished, and only a few escaped. The Prussians had won a signal victory over their enemy.

After the lapse of an hour, the regiment which Frederick had conducted, returned to the main army. Frederick had been slightly wounded, but he ignored the pain. He was concerned only with the victory and glory of the day.

Old General Klay, at whose side he still rode, cast from time to time a tender look at the youth.

At last they reached the Commander-in-Chief, who was busy dictating triumphant messages which were at once carried by different horsemen to their destination. Frederick had a chance now to gaze over the battlefield, where the surgeons and doctors were busy binding wounds and offering help to friend and foe alike. Soldiers, weapons, cannons and horses lay there, making a scene of great confusion. As far as his eye could see, there were fleeing Austrians and pursuing Prussians.

Suddenly Frederick felt a touch on his arm, and turning, recognized old General Klay, who beckoned him to follow. Together they stepped

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up to the Commander-in-Chief, who said: "I congratulate you, General Klay, for your success."

"Not so, your Majesty," responded General Klay, and suddenly Frederick realized that he was in the presence of his King. "The honor is not mine," continued the general, "but belongs to this youth, who led us safely through the swamp, and by his alertness, saved my life when I was in personal conflict with an Austrian. I should not have seen to-day's victory but for this lad."

The King gazed long and steadily at the embarrassed youth, and at last said: "He would make a perfect soldier, but from what he has told me his parents forbid it. I could make use of him, and so I must speak with his parents."

"At present, we have nothing further to do here to-day," he continued, as he sprang upon his horse, and gave orders to the men to fall in line. "One more battle will decide the war. Come, general, let us take a few moments to visit the parents of this brave boy."

Entranced with his gracious King, and the prospect of this visit, Frederick spurred his horse forward. He led them toward his simple home, to which the old uncle had returned a little while before. He was relating what Frederick was doing in the valley.

"But here he is now," said the uncle to the Kammers, as he glanced through the open win-

dow, "and he is accompanied by our King and his followers. Trust me, the King is coming to see you, and no one else."

Frederick's parents were so stunned by the news that they stood dumb-founded; and before they could collect themselves, the old King, Frederick the Great, had stepped into the little home-like room and with his piercing eye was scanning each member of the family.

"Mr. Kammer," said the King, "you must be a good man, for you have a good, brave son. This lad honors his father and his mother and knows what it means to be obedient. I am sorry that you will not give him permission to become a soldier. I am in need of such boys. But I will not try to persuade you. You are master in your own house, and your King's authority stops at the threshold."

"Worthy King," stammered the old father, and the tears stood in his eyes, "if you can use my boy in your army, take him. For our God, our country and our King, no sacrifice can be too great."

"But what do you say, dear little mother?" questioned the King in friendly tones. "Will you give up your boy?"

"Yes, and with my blessing," responded the mother tenderly, yet firmly. "My son has long desired to serve you, and if you think him worthy

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and capable of entering the ranks, then I give my permission."

"O father! O mother!" shouted the boy in rapture, as in turn he clasped his parents in his arms. "With pain and yet with joy, I shall leave you, for I feel it is God's will that leads me."

The King then chatted a little while with the old uncle.

"We must now be off," said the King to father Kammer, "and your son must not stay behind. For his leadership and bravery, I name him first lieutenant; and if he continues to conduct himself as he has done to-day, he will make a name for himself."

The parents offered their thanks to the King, while the old uncle wiped his gray beard, into which many tears had rolled, and murmured, "It isn't right."

"What isn't right?" asked the King.

"That I, an old cripple, can no longer serve my country."

"Don't complain," said the King kindly, "you served your country faithfully and bravely. I know you well, Officer Conrad Wallan. I have not forgotten your valor. You can now live contentedly on your pension. Here is a little remembrance from your old King, which I give you as a thank offering for training this lad so well." So saying, he drew forth his gold watch, and laid it in Uncle Conrad's hand. "Don't forget the

King," said he. "Farewell, my good people—" and in an instant he was off, accompanied by Frederick and his followers.

Half-sad, half-glad, mother Kammer rested her head on her husband's shoulder and wept. To hear her son's praise from the lips of the King pleased her, while the hasty departure tore at her heart strings. She recognized, however, that God's hand had pointed out the way for her boy, and she accepted her loss in confidence and hope.

Mr. Kammer agreed that Frederick was now in his right place; and he, too, was satisfied, saying: "God has taken him from us. He will protect him and restore him to our arms."

But no one in that little house was happier than Uncle Conrad, who rejoiced over his gift and the honors conferred upon his nephew.

"Wait a little while," said he, "your son will be a general before the war is over. The person upon whom the King's eye falls with a kindly glance, will make his way whether he wishes or not. What a glorious day this has been for us all."

"You're right," said Mr. Kammer, while the mother nodded assent, and said, "With God's help all will yet be brought to a good end."

CHAPTER IV

THE BANQUET

The victory at Hubertsburg brought the long, weary Seven Years War to a joyful close. The King returned to his capital, and with him those generals and officers whose posts were not in distant cities. As for our young Frederick, the prophecies of his old Uncle Conrad came to pass. The eyes of his grateful King had rested with satisfaction on his deeds and in the last battle of the war, where, by his untiring zeal and valor, he had covered himself with glory, he had been made general. On his return to Berlin, his King presented him with a house fully furnished from cellar to roof. With many thanks, Frederick accepted this handsome gift.

His Majesty then said: "As a further proof of my regard for you, I invite myself and my staff to dine with you next week."

"That would afford me not only the greatest honor, but the greatest happiness," said Frederick, graciously.

Invitations were speedily sent to General Kammer's comrades, among whom were many who looked with envy upon the young General's ad-

vancement. Frederick was aware of their feeling in the matter, and so was the King, who often said: "It is not the post that honors the man; it is the man who does honor to the post."

Frederick's comrades listened attentively to these words and seemed to be in accord with them, but they cast sly disdainful looks at the peasant boy. Frederick, however, held himself erect, and scorned to notice their opinion, although it annoyed him.

His comrades would have preferred to absent themselves from his banquet, but they feared to arouse the disfavor of the King. Many guests, therefore, were assembled at the appointed hour in the handsomely furnished home of the King's favorite general.

Frederick proved a perfect host and entertained his friends graciously. When the King arrived, Frederick greeted him warmly and thanked him for the honor of his presence. He led him into the grand salon, where his uniformed comrades respectfully awaited their King.

The old King nodded at them in a friendly way, and said, laughingly: "Gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to find you all present. Another fortress shall be attacked in the dining-room, but a harmless one. So let us proceed at once. Forward, march!"

The gentlemen nodded approval, the doors were thrown open and the guests entered the dining-room. The King, of course, took the seat of honor, with General Kammer at his right. All the other guests took their places according to their rank or station.

"You have planned everything very nicely, General Kammer," said the King, looking over the bountifully spread table, "I believe you would make an excellent master of ceremonies. In fact, gentlemen, I believe that anything our host might undertake would be well done. Remember, too, it was no light matter for him to rise to a generalship. He has my respect and thanks."

Everybody kept his eyes fastened upon the plate before him, as the King sang the praises of this soldier boy. The King noticed their displeasure and quickly changed the subject; and soon all were taking animated part in the conversation.

Suddenly a knock and loud talking gave evidence that some one without wished to enter, but the servants were denying admittance.

"We have been invited and we must enter," were the words that reached Frederick's ears.

"Pardon me, your Majesty," cried Frederick in astonishment, "that is my uncle's voice, and he is accompanying my parents."

The King looked at Frederick, who was deeply moved, and said: "I am glad that they have come, and I hope you feel that they are welcome. Don't let my presence disturb you. Bring them right in." The other guests could scarcely repress a laugh.

Frederick immediately jumped to his feet, hastened to the door and embraced his parents and his old uncle. For a moment, he seemed to forget all about his honored guest—the King. As Frederick led his people into the room, he could see plainly the scoffing expression of his comrades. Mastering himself quickly, he took his father and mother by the hand and led them to the King, who had thoroughly admired the scene of re-union and affection.

"Pardon me, worthy Majesty, but this is my father and this is my mother, whom I love devotedly. Their sudden appearance made me forget for a moment that you were my guest."

The King arose while the astonished guests watched him.

"No excuses, my boy," said the King, "you have given us all a pleasure for which we must thank you. You have not forgotten, in the time of your advancement and success, that you were once poor. Nor are you ashamed of the poor parents who worked for you and trained you and made

it possible for you to become what you are. I honor him who honors his father and mother."

Turning to the other guests, he said: "Gentlemen, here you see the parents who have given to the Prussian army one of its best generals. For such a gift we must all be thankful."

"I would ask, General Kammer, that you bestow on me the honor of seating your parents and your uncle at my side."

Frederick's happiness knew no bounds, and his parents were entranced, while the tears rolled down their cheeks.

"Let us be seated," said the King. The Kammerers took their seats to the right and left of the King, and Uncle Conrad at Mrs. Kammer's side. It was a strange sight. The simple peasant folk offered a great contrast to the officers, with their gold-trimmed military dress whose lapels gleamed with medals. The friendliness of the King quickly put everybody at ease, and soon the old folks felt perfectly at home. The officers forgot their disdain, and recognized in these poor people a wealth of love and fidelity to their country and their King.

No one laughed mockingly—each one in turn felt a high regard for the boy who did not stoop to disown his poor parents, but offered to them every respect and homage.

Frederick reveled in rapture, his eyes feasting with supreme delight on his father and mother. Every now and then he would press the hand of his old uncle.

At last the dinner was over. The King rose, and said to Frederick's parents: "I must leave you; but remember, you must not return to your home without paying a visit to your King. I shall feel myself honored. You, my boy, have given me the greatest joy of my life, in that you have shown a heart full of gratitude to your beloved parents. Had you disowned them, you would no longer be classed as my friend.

"Now, gentlemen, take home with you the lesson which you have learned to-day. Honor your father and mother that it may go well with you upon this earth. Frederick has never failed to remember this commandment—the result you have all seen. Now, my dear friends, I bid you all adieu."

The King withdrew, and loud shouts of "Long live the King," echoed after him. The other guests soon followed his example, leaving Frederick alone with his relatives.

Then new joys and more embracing and talking began all over. Soon they retired for the night; and in the morning it was agreeably settled that

henceforth they would all share Frederick's home and the comfort he could secure for them.

The King's regard, which never waned, lighted like the sun of heaven this happy family circle; and never did Frederick forget the commandment: 'Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.'

THE BASKET OF FLOWERS

CHAPTERS.

- I. FATHER AND DAUGHTER.
- II. THE GIFT.
- III. CONSEQUENCES.



The Dainty Little Basket.

THE BASKET OF FLOWERS

CHAPTER I

FATHER AND DAUGHTER

In a little German village not far from Hamburg, there lived a worthy florist, named Johann Schmidt. He had an only daughter, Marie, the pride of his life. Their days passed contentedly in their little cottage, which was graced on all sides by a flowering garden.

Marie grew to be a comely lass, and as the years went by she became more and more charming; for modesty, truthfulness, gentleness and kindness added to her many graces. She took care of her father's house and kept it spotlessly clean; and often when she found time, she would join him to help him weed and water the plants and make the garden appear, as she called it, "A paradise on earth!"

Her wise father taught her many things about the flowers, and pointed out to her their various colors, shapes and perfumes, all so beautifully arranged by the wisdom, goodness and power of the Creator.

One day in March, as she brought the first little violet to her father, he said to her: "Let this

little flower, my dear Marie, be to you a symbol of humility, modesty and goodness. It dresses itself in no garish color, it prefers to blossom in little, quiet places; and, half hidden under the leaves, it sends forth a delicate perfume. Be like this little violet, my dear child, shunning all forwardness, and quietly doing good while you live."

As the roses and the lilies came forth in all their glory, the father pointed to the lily upon which the morning sun was shedding its bright rays, and said: "This flower is a symbol of innocence. See how beautiful, how bright, how pure, she stands! The whitest satin cannot equal the purity of her petals. But the purest of all colors is the most difficult to preserve. Easily, too, is a lily petal broken and lost. One may not touch it roughly. So, too, my child, can a word, a thought spoil your innocence, your purity which, above all things, you must guard."

Under the care of such a wise and loving father, Marie grew like the flowers in the garden, glorious as a rose, innocent as a lily, modest as a violet.

The old man gazed with satisfaction at the garden which repaid him in beauty for all his care; yet greater pride filled his heart, as he looked upon the daughter who so amply repaid his good training.

Early one morning in May, Marie went to the woods and gathered a goodly number of hazel branches out of which her father would make the daintiest little flower baskets. She had at the same time picked some May blossoms which she had fastened to her waist. On the way home, just as she was crossing the old wooden bridge, she met one of the rich ladies of the neighborhood, accompanied by her daughter, Amelia.

"Oh, have the May blossoms come out so soon?" cried Amelia, who loved these particular flowers more than any others.

"Yes," answered Marie, "I have just gathered these in the woods. You are welcome to them."

"Thank you," said Amelia, while her mother offered to pay for them.

"Oh, no, I couldn't take any money," said Marie.

"Well, then, we will order some, while they are in blossom, and you may come with them, each morning," said Amelia.

Marie filled the order and was able to earn a nice little sum of money, for which she was very grateful. Each day she wondered how she could show Amelia her thanks. At last she hit upon a plan.

CHAPTER II

THE GIFT

Taking a dainty little basket which her father had woven, filling it with the most delicate flowers and tying it with pretty ribbons, she carried it to Amelia's house, early one afternoon. As Marie entered, she found Amelia preparing for a party, and her maid was arranging her hair for her.

"My dear child," cried Amelia, in surprise, "you must have robbed your whole garden to give me such a basket of flowers. What a beautiful collection! How I admire them! What a pretty basket! Come with me, and we will show the gift to my mother." She took Marie by the hand and led her to her mother's room.

"Oh, see, mother," she said, as she entered, "what a handsome gift Marie has brought me. Such a cunning basket you certainly never saw before, and such flowers, I am sure, grow nowhere else in the world."

"Yes," said her mother, "they are both so beautiful that I should like to have an artist paint them."

"Wait here a moment," said the mother, as she left the room with her daughter.

"We must reward the child," said the mother to Amelia. "Now, what shall it be?"

"Give her my pretty dress," said Amelia. "It is almost new, but you know it is too small for me. It would fit Marie, however, with a little alteration."

"Very well," said her mother, "let it be so."

Amelia then called her maid, Jessie, who soon had the dress wrapped. The maid handed it to Amelia, with a very dark, angry, jealous look in her eye, as if she felt that the dress should have been given to her.

"There, Marie," said Amelia, "the dress is almost new, and you must think of me whenever you wear it."

Marie took the dress, thanked Amelia for it, and departed.

Jessie, cross and dissatisfied, went on with her work, secretly wishing that Marie might never come there again.

In the meantime, Marie hastened home to her father, donned her new dress and rejoiced with him over its beauty. Then she took it off, folded it carefully and laid it away. Scarcely had Marie had time to put on her old frock again and fasten a few flowers at her waist, when Amelia, pale and trembling, rushed into the little cottage.

"My dear child," said Amelia, "what have you done? My mother's diamond ring is gone. No

one entered her room but you. Oh, give it back to me, quickly, or it will lead to so much trouble. Come, give it to me now."

Marie started and grew pale. "What do you mean?" asked Marie, "I have no ring. I saw no ring."

"Marie," said Amelia, "I beg you for your own good, give me the ring. You have no idea how valuable the diamond is. It cost five hundred dollars. If you had known that, I am sure you would not have taken it. You thought it was a trifle. Give it to me and you will be forgiven."

Marie began to cry, and said: "Truly, I know nothing of the ring. I never touched anything in your house. My father always taught me never to take what belonged to another."

"My child," then said her father, "you well know that to take a ring is a dreadful theft. Remember, it says, 'Thou shalt not steal.' For such an act you will be imprisoned. You must answer for this theft, not only to these people, but to the highest Judge who sees and reads each heart, and from whom no secrets can be hid and no escape is possible. Did the brightness of the diamond blind your eyes and lead you into temptation? Then lie not, but tell the truth and return the ring. That is the only way to correct the error, if it ever be possible to right it."

Marie said, tearfully, "Truly, truly, father, I know nothing of the ring. If I had picked up such a ring in the street, I should have had no rest, until I had found the owner. Truly, I did not take the ring!"

"Child, child, how you grieve me," said her father.

"But, father," continued Marie, "you know yourself that in my whole life, I never took what did not belong to me. Never did I take an apple from any one's tree, or a handful of grass from another's field; how much less should I be likely to take anything so valuable. Believe me, father I have never told you an untruth in my whole life. God knows I speak honestly."

"Now," said her father, "I believe you and a great weight has fallen from my heart. Fear not, my child, for there is only one thing to fear, and that is sin. God will watch over you and bring your innocence to light."

Amelia then dried her eyes, and said: "I now believe, too, that Marie did not take it. But—who has the ring? Indeed," continued Amelia, "I return to my mother sorry for her loss, but with a lighter heart."

As soon as Amelia had closed the door, Marie sank at her father's feet. He lifted her tenderly and looked into her deep blue eyes, long and

steadily, and at last he said: "Yes, Marie, you are innocent."

"O father," cried Marie, "what will be the end of all this?"

"Trust in God, my child, and be brave. Hold to the truth and no matter what is threatened or what is promised, do not turn from the truth; for a good conscience makes a soft pillow—even in a prison. We may be parted and"—he stopped, for suddenly the door was thrust open, and there, on the door-sill, stood two officers.

Marie uttered a loud cry and threw her arms around her father. "O father," cried she, "don't let them take me away."

"We have come," said one of the officers, "to search this house, and the sooner we begin, the better."

The little cottage was soon searched from garret to cellar, but no trace of the ring was found.

"We must take your daughter and lock her up in jail for the night," said the officer, "and perhaps in the morning she will confess and tell what she did with the ring."

Marie grew faint and the tears streamed from her eyes, as the two men led her off to the jail; while her old father sank upon his knees and prayed to God to give them strength to bear this great trial.



“We have come,” said the officer, “to search this house.”

CHAPTER III

CONSEQUENCES

Marie soon found herself in jail. When the door of her cell had been securely locked, she wrung her hands and sank exhausted upon the floor. Crying and moaning, she prayed that she might be freed from this dreadful charge; and soon a gentle sleep stilled her pain.

When she awoke, it was late at night and so dark that she could see nothing about her. For a long time she was so dazed that she could not think where she was. At last, she remembered all her pain and sorrow, and the dreadful crime of which she had been accused. A stream of tears flowed down her cheeks, her throat seemed choked with pain and she sighed and sighed.

Suddenly, a little light began to creep into her dark cell; for the moon, which had been hidden by a cloud, was slowly peering forth. It sent its first ray of light into Marie's cell and pictured the bars of the window on the floor at her side. Little by little, the room grew lighter, and as the dreadful darkness round about her began to disappear, just so there crept into Marie's heart a lightness sent to her from above.

"Do you come, dear Moon, to visit me, your old friend? When I was at home and you looked at me, through the leafy trees, you seemed much brighter than tonight. Do you feel sorry for me? How is my father? Is he watching and praying for me? Oh, if you could speak, dear Moon, then you could tell him how his Marie is longing for him."

Suddenly Marie noticed a fragrance about her, and looking down at her waist she saw the half-wilted flowers which she had worn all day.

"Are you still with me, my dear flowers?" she asked. "Did you, too, have to come with me into this lonely cell? You poor, innocent things! But let it be my comfort that I deserve this blow as little as you do."

She loosened them from her waist and took them up closer to view their beauty, and said: "Who would have thought when I gathered you, this morn, that ere the sun had gone to rest, I should be thrown into this cell? How changeable everything is on this earth. Not one of us knows how soon things will alter." She paused, and her tears fell upon the flowers.

"He who never forgets the flowers," said she, "and who sends them rain and dew, will not forget me. O God, send comfort into my heart and into the heart of my father, just as Thou fillest

the cups of the thirsty flowers with clear dew from heaven!

“Oh, my dear flowers, how you recall to my mind the good lessons my father taught me.

“‘Roses,’ he would say, ‘look at you, my daughter, from among their thorns; and they shall teach you, that from sorrows, joys shall come forth.’ I will remember all you have said, dear father, and be patient and wait.”

“You little forget-me-nots remind me that he said: ‘We must not forget the Creator and he will not forget us.’

“You little Mignonettes! You, too, do your part well. You fill this cell with your sweet fragrance; and like you, I will do good, even to those who have thrust me into this lonely place.”

A sudden darkness filled the cell, for the passing clouds had once more obscured the moon. Marie could not see her flowers and a strange fear again crept over her. But soon the clouds passed by and all was once more bright.

“O God,” she prayed, “bring me out of the darkness of this guilt into the light of innocence.” Marie then closed her eyes and soon she fell asleep. When she awoke, it was bright daylight and she heard voices at the door of her cell; then, a loud knock.

"Who's there?" she asked.

In response came the words: "Be ready in a few moments to appear before the judge."

In less time than it takes to tell, Marie was ready and was soon standing in a large room in the court house.

Amelia, her mother, and Jessie, the maid, together with several other members of that household, and last, but not least, Marie's poor, old father had all assembled in this room. They had turned their eyes upon her when she tremblingly entered.

After Marie had taken an oath to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, she was questioned and questioned, till she felt that not another question could be thought of and that if it were asked, there was nothing more to tell. Her answers were straight-forward and unshaken; and left no one in doubt as to her honesty. The judge motioned to Marie to be seated and called upon the first witness, Jessie, the maid, to appear before him.

Jessie came forward, smiling boldly, and filled with joy at the thought that now she would have her revenge. "Soon," thought she, "Marie will be sent to prison, and never again will she get a dress that belongs to me. Didn't I fix her fine when I took that ring?" Suddenly she looked up at the judge. Their eyes met.

What was it that she saw in his eye? Why did he seem to accuse her? Did he know all about it? What made that look pierce her soul and fill her with such fear and pain? Little by little, the smile faded from Jessie's face, her teeth chattered, her mouth grew dry, she could scarcely speak. Her knees began to tremble, tears filled her eyes. The dreadful crushing pain in her heart suddenly cried out for relief, and she moaned:

"O judge, forgive me for this wicked act. I can bear it no longer. I must tell it all. I did it. I alone am guilty. Punish me, but do not send me to prison."

Surprise filled the court room. Marie cried for joy. Everyone was excited. At last the judge rose, and with a stern expression on his face he looked upon the guilty Jessie, and said, in a fatherly way:

"Now that you have confessed your guilt and have saved an innocent girl from prison, your sentence shall be less severe. Instead of imprisonment, you shall be sent to the 'House of Correction,' where you will have time to think of your dreadful wickedness and learn to become a good girl."

At a tap of the bell, an officer came forward and Jessie was led away. So, in the twinkling of an eye, Marie and Jessie had changed places.

Amelia and her mother came and kissed Marie and begged her forgiveness; but Marie was too overcome with joy to speak. All that she wanted was to be alone with her father and know that he was satisfied with her.

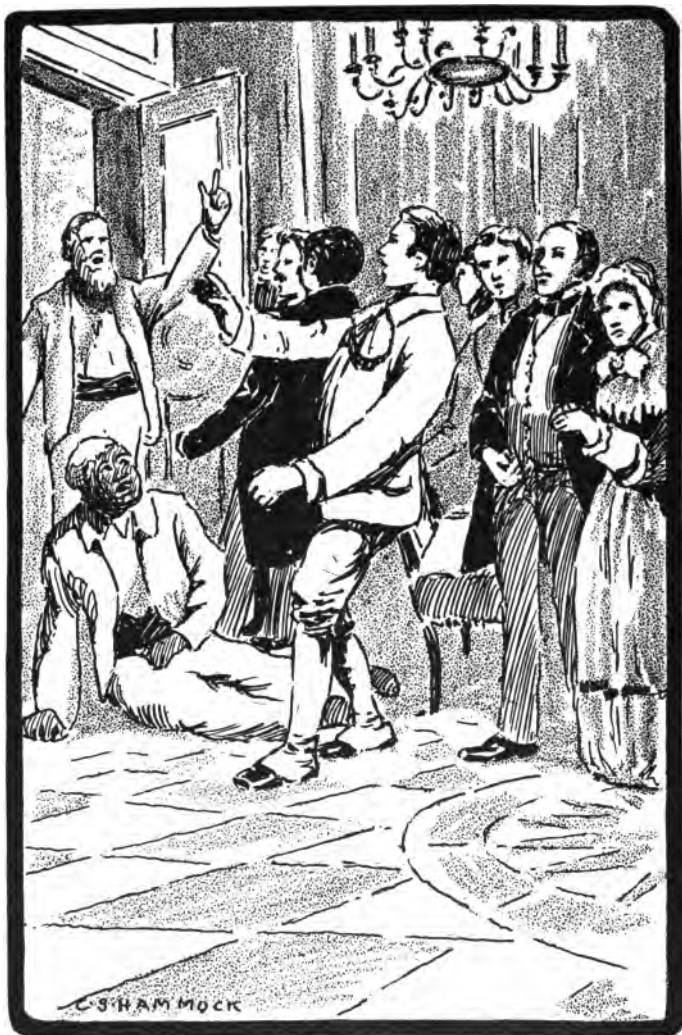
The people began to leave the court house, each one congratulating Marie upon her victory.

Amelia and her mother soon provided the happy father and his innocent daughter with a carriage which hurried them through the noisy, happy crowd, back to the stillness of their little cottage, and to the joy that awaited them there.

OVER THE SEA

CHAPTERS.

- I. THE HOUSE OF FORTUNE.
- II. THE LAPSE OF TIME.
- III. THE BROTHERLY HAND.
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- VI. THE DISCOVERY.
- VII. THE WEAVER'S HOME.
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“Your uncle has returned to hold court in this room.”

OVER THE SEA

CHAPTER I

THE HOUSE OF FORTUNE

Peter Lohman was a wealthy merchant who lived with his three sons in the city of Bremen, where he carried on a prosperous business. He was a good citizen, and it is not at all surprising that people wished him well and predicted that he would live to enjoy many years of happiness which his wealth and his children would afford him.

Often as Mr. Lohman sat musing over his prosperity, he would say: "When my three boys are full grown, I will give Albert, the oldest, my business, for he is a born merchant. As for Andreas, he prefers to travel, so I will make a sea captain of him. With Erich—well, he is so quiet and shy, not at all like other boys of his age, I hardly know what to do with him. He had better live on the money which I will bequeath him. It will be sufficient to last him till his death. So all my boys will be provided for, and I need not worry over their future."

Thus thought Mr. Lohman as he smilingly gazed with beaming eyes upon his possessions.

We poor short-sighted people, however, have no right to count upon events which a single hour may change; how then, dare we count upon years of security; for without the divine will, nothing comes to pass.

As has been said, however, Mr. Peter Lohman believed that neither he nor his children should ever want for anything in this world.

When Albert had reached his eighteenth year, Andreas his sixteenth, and Erich his fifteenth, the solid and unshakeable house of fortune which Mr. Lohman had built, began to crumble, for the news had arrived that the French had seized six German trading vessels. Four of these happened to belong to Mr. Lohman. For a moment he stood aghast, then he said: "What if it be so. As long as I have my business, my house and my immense capital, which is so well invested, I still have enough. Thousands would willingly change places with me. Moreover, I can soon make up for all my losses."

But things did not happen just the way he planned. One business misfortune followed another in quick succession, until in less than one year the rich merchant found himself very much reduced in circumstances. This calamity weighed so heavily on his mind that he became seriously ill and died. The three sons for whom the father had predicted such a fortunate future, now stood dejected and alone.

A friendly neighbor took pity on the boys and fathered them. He sold their house and garden for them, and was able to give each boy one thousand dollars out of the proceeds.

"Now, my boys," said the well-meaning man, "the interest that this money will yield you, will not be enough for you to live upon, so you must all decide what line of work you wish to pursue."

"I wish to be a merchant," said Albert. "My father well knew my ability, and he often promised me that some day I should succeed him. Of course, our business has failed, but I am sure that I can build up another, till it becomes as successful as my father's. I will work for a year and save money, and with that I will begin."

"Well said, my boy. You will be able to get on in the world, if you always remember to make the best of what befalls you," said the neighbor.

"Now, Andreas, what do you wish to do?"

"I don't know," responded the boy. "My desire is to go out into the world. I should not like to stay here in Bremen, and have everybody pity me because I was once so rich and am now so poor. Let me see the world. I will take my thousand dollars with me, and when a good opportunity presents itself, I will invest it."

The good neighbor shrugged his shoulders, and said: "I do not like to hinder you; but it would be far better for you to remain right here and learn a trade. For a trade is a solid foundation."

Andreas shook his head, and said: "No, I prefer to seek my fortune elsewhere."

With a deep sigh the neighbor turned to Erich and said: "What do you wish to do?"

"You have just said that a trade is a solid foundation; so I will take your advice and learn a trade. I know that I am not as brainy as Albert, or as daring as Andreas, and so I cannot follow their example. I have often watched my father weaving in the factory, and I think now that I should like to be a weaver. If I could only earn my daily bread as a weaver, I should be thankful and contented."

As Erich spoke so humbly, his brother Albert raised his head proudly and cast a disdainful look upon him.

The kind neighbor, on the contrary, seized Erich by the hand and in a friendly tone said: "Your humble words affect me, and if material fortune does not fall to your lot, perhaps the best fortune will grow in your heart—the fortune of contentment and satisfaction. If my prayers for your welfare be answered, my boy, you will be fortunate, indeed."

Andreas then took Erich by the hand and said: "Brother, I will never forget you, and should you ever need my arm, my heart or my head, count upon them as your own."

Erich pressed his brother's hand in response, and the tears in his eyes expressed his gratitude better than spoken words.

Meanwhile, Albert had turned his back upon his brothers, as he murmured, "Both of them will yet be beggars, but I—well, time will tell when we meet in later years."

CHAPTER II

THE LAPSE OF TIME

Ten years had flown since the death of their father. Albert lived in a handsome residence, surrounded by every luxury. He had made his way, step by step. Fortunate speculations had made him rich, and finally he had married a wealthy lady. One idea had always been present in his mind, and that was: "My money must double itself, so that I may be known as the rich Albert Lohman."

Consequently, he had worked industriously, and fortune smiled upon his efforts. Night and day found him busy, and his brow became more and more lined, his eyes duller, and his cheeks paler. It was seldom that a passing smile banished the care from his face.

Although Albert was so very rich, he did not understand how to make good use of his money. Not once did he share a penny of it with his poor brother Erich, although Erich certainly needed help.

A peculiar and very unnatural relationship existed between these two brothers. At first it had not been so marked. Erich often called upon Albert, even though he was not kindly

received. But then Erich thought: "Albert is my brother, and I will endure his unkindness patiently."

Albert never asked his brother: "How are you getting along, Erich?" Never did he seek to find out his circumstances or his needs. Then, too, in the presence of others, he treated Erich with pity, as if he wished to show his friends that he only half noticed his brother, because he was poor. Erich would then watch his chance and slip away.

This treatment pained poor Erich sorely; but, as he loved his brother, he forgave him and called on him again and again. Often he would tell the little details of his life, and was indeed happy if Albert only half listened to him. This state of affairs continued for several years.

Poor Erich, who had become a first class weaver, had managed to purchase a modest little cottage and a little weaving machine. By the greatest industry, Erich was able to earn just enough to support his wife and son, and a very little more to lay by each year. This extra money he carried one day, to his brother Albert, begging him to invest it in his prosperous business and pay him interest on it.

Albert heard the request but was indifferent. Finally he said: "Is that all you can save through the whole long year? Poor wretch. This last year has again made me ten thousand dollars

richer. But truly such a poor head as yours couldn't very well earn any more. It will be just the same through your whole life."

"That may or may not be so," answered Erich. "I do the best I can, and because my efforts yield me no financial return, that does not indicate a stupid head. Perhaps things would brighten for me, too, if I had ten thousand dollars. But, it is not to be, and so I accept my circumstances."

"What would you do with the money?" questioned Albert one day, when he happened to be in a talkative mood.

"If I had so much money, I would buy a piece of land, plant mulberry trees upon it, raise my own silk-worms, and in that way get my raw silk at half price. Then I would buy an extra weaving machine and thus increase my business."

Albert laughed scornfully at the proposition, and said: "Give up such high ideas."

"I shall have to, since I know of no one who would lend me the money," said Erich sadly.

"I won't, for one—not even one thousand dollars," said Albert. "If you ever had any hopes in that direction, give them up, for you'll never receive a copper from me."

"It really is very harsh of you to talk so to your brother. I ask nothing of you but brotherly love and kindness. These do not cost you anything." Albert felt somewhat abashed, for he

knew how unbrotherly and unkindly he had dealt with Erich. A momentary flush suffused his cheeks, and for the first time in his life, he invited his brother to call on him again.

Erich now believed that he had won his brother's love, and so accepted the invitation. Soon, however, he noticed that his visits were unwelcome. At last Erich was forced to confess that Albert loved nothing but his own self. This proved true beyond a doubt, when Albert said to his brother one day: "You must certainly see that a poor weaver like you, does not fit into my select company, and it would be much better if you stayed away altogether. If at any time you must see me, call at my office,—do you understand?"

"Yes," said Erich sadly. Hot tears stood in his eyes and a pallor overspread his face; then, turning to hide his feelings, he seized his hat and hurried out.

Albert was pleased that Erich's visits would now be at an end. That he had torn his brother's heart didn't trouble him.

Erich returned to his house, seated himself at his machine and worked harder than ever. This helped him to compose his overcharged feelings and to still his pain. As the shuttle moved quickly to and fro, and the brilliant colored silks

crossed each other, tender thoughts crept into Erich's heart and the old love for his brother returned. "Perhaps I do not fit in his home among his rich friends, but at least I may call at his office."

Many weeks elapsed before Erich again turned his steps toward his brother's home. Although his love for Albert still lived, yet it was mixed with fears of insult which cut his heart like a sharp knife.

One evening, Erich gazed across at his brother's house, which was brilliantly illuminated. Sweet strains of music found their way into Erich's little workshop. Curiosity impelled him to go over and ask a servant what was taking place. In response, he received the information that his master's wedding anniversary was to be celebrated.

Poor Erich.

His brother had sent him no invitation. Cut to the quick, he returned to his little shop, where he sought to crush the pain this slight had caused him.

Another year passed, during which time a new member was added to Albert's family. The child, a boy, was named Oscar. Erich was not informed of this event and had to learn it from the lips of strangers. It pained him to think that his brother should so ignore him, but he said: "I will forgive

him. He is rich and I am poor; but, should it ever happen that he should be poor and I rich, then may this hour of pain be wiped from my memory."

The bond of love that had linked him to Albert had by this last act been broken asunder, and Erich felt keenly that all his hopes of ever winning his brother's love were now extinguished.

Erich's visits to his brother's house were ended. He spent his days in work, and his evenings in the bosom of his happy family. His child, named Andreas, in honor of his Uncle Andreas far over the sea, was now a strong lad, the joy of his parents' hearts. Little Andreas bloomed like a flower of the field. He was a happy, light-hearted, good-natured child, while his cousin Oscar, over the way, was hot-tempered, weak and headstrong. These qualities became more and more noticeable as the two boys grew older. They were only a few years apart in their ages, and now entered the same school.

With boys, wealth and position count as nothing. What wonder was it then, that the poor weaver's son Andreas soon won the love of his schoolmates. Everybody preferred his genial manners to those of the disagreeable Oscar.

Erich had trained his son Andreas to be courteous and respectful to both young and old, and to bear patiently with his cousin Oscar, who had

been taught to pass him unnoticed in the streets, and to slight him at all times.

“Never mind, my child,” said Erich, “I cannot change this state of affairs, but we will look for justice to Him who, in His own good time, will right all wrongs.”

CHAPTER III

THE BROTHERLY HAND

Many years had flown and the brothers had heard nothing from the long absent Andreas. At last, a letter arrived full of adventurous tales. It was addressed to Albert, but intended for Erich as well.

It told how Andreas had landed in San Domingo and with his money had purchased a small plantation. With industry, he had managed to make money, but an up-rising among his slaves had forced him to leave in haste. With the help of one clever negro boy he had managed to reach the seacoast. Nothing had he saved but his life and his friend—for as such he ever after regarded Banty, the little negro boy.

He described Banty as, "tall, homely, round-shouldered and black as a raven; but in his breast," Andreas had said, "there beats a heart true and kind; a clever head rests on his shoulders; friendliness speaks from his big, black velvety eyes. He is strong as a bear, quick as a deer and cunning as a fox. What is best of all—he loves his master more than himself."

Then the letter told how Andreas and Banty had been taken aboard a ship which was bound

for Cuba. After landing, they had wandered about until they reached a plantation where many men were engaged in the tobacco fields.

Andreas had applied to the overseer for work and he, in turn, had conducted him to the owner. After giving satisfactory proof of his ability, Andreas had received the position of foreman in a cigar factory and Banty was employed as a workman.

At the end of the year, the business had increased two-fold through the painstaking efforts of Andreas; and the owner, to show his appreciation, had doubled his foreman's salary. Andreas had been enabled to lay by each year a goodly sum of money. In a very short time, he was able to purchase a plantation of his own, and before many years he had become immensely wealthy.

Everything was now progressing smoothly, and Andreas felt that he was sitting in the lap of fortune. It was this happy state of mind which had prompted him to think of his absent brothers and to ask them to express any wish or to ask for any help. He said he would be only too glad to gratify their desires.

"Share this letter with Erich, for perhaps he may be in a position where he will need the brotherly hand which I stretch over the sea to help him. You, Albert, always had an enterprising spirit, and have, no doubt, succeeded. But good Erich, he wanted to be a weaver and perhaps he

is poor. My possessions are large and I wish to share my all with my brothers."

It pleased Albert's proud spirit to think that he could write back and say: "My wealth is equal to yours, if not greater."

How overjoyed Erich would have been to hear from Andreas. Only a short while ago Albert had refused Erich a thousand dollars, and now here was Andreas offering to gratify his every wish. What timely aid! What friendly brotherly help! How happy Albert should have been to carry this news to Erich. Surely he would drop all work, and with the letter in his pocket hurry to the workshop of his brother. Should you not think that any one who had received such a letter would have done so?

But no—Albert read the letter and reread it, laughed scornfully, folded it and locked it in his desk. "Erich doesn't need to know anything about it," murmured Albert.

After the lapse of a week, Albert wrote to Andreas about his own prosperity and told him that Erich was too proud and independent to take help from anyone. Besides, if help were needed, he would see to it that Erich was assisted; and as he lived quite near to his brother, he wished to be the first to lend a hand.

"My only regret is that Erich has changed so. You would hardly know him, he is so disagreeable,

hardened and embittered. He has repeatedly refused any help from me. He wishes you luck and asks that you bother no further about him."

Thus did Albert write to his brother in Cuba, because he was ashamed of himself and wished to hide the fact that he had let his poor brother across the street suffer in want, while he reveled in wealth.

Albert thought to himself: "Neither of my brothers will ever know that I hid this letter."

When Andreas received the answer, he could not, of course, imagine that Albert was slandering his brother, and as he continued reading the letter, he thought to himself: "Strange how Erich has changed!"

From that time on, Andreas and Albert exchanged letters frequently, and many a warning did Albert receive to keep a watchful eye over Erich and to send word at once when assistance was needed.

Now we have seen the condition of the three brothers, twenty years after their father's death.

Poor Erich. No one seemed to have a single hope for him, and everybody, himself included, was sure that he would die as poor a man as he had always been, "unwept, unhonored and unsung."

CHAPTER IV

THE INVITATION

One bright morning in spring, Oscar and his mother were seated in the garden, when the father stepped into their midst and with a stern, anxious look on his face, said: "I am glad to find you together, for I have a weighty matter to lay before you."

"What can it be?" asked his wife, curiously. "You look as if you had lost everything."

"Perhaps you have spoken truly. But bear with me." Turning to Oscar, he said: "You know that your uncle Andreas in Cuba is a very rich man."

"Yes, father, I have often heard you say that he is master of millions, and owner of the best cultivated coffee, tobacco and sugar plantations, and were I not the son of a rich merchant, I would like to call Andreas Lohman, my father."

Taking a letter from his pocket, the father continued: "Hear what my brother has to say:

"Dear Brother:—

"Since my last letter to you, I have met with a very serious loss—in the death of my wife and child; and now I

stand alone in the world. We must not murmur at the trials of life—but it is painful and hard to lose all that one loves upon earth.

“My heart is as empty and deserted as a wilderness; but if I had some one with whom to share my all, I could bring a new joy into my life. You, my dear brother, are surrounded by wealth, by wife and child, and so could not possibly think of giving me your son to be my staff in my old age. But I again remember my nephew Andreas, Erich’s son. A faint ray of hope glows in my heart, that perhaps Erich, who is poor, would give me his son. If I should pour my wealth into Erich’s hands, if I should promise to take upon myself the care and welfare of his child and leave him my fortune, would not Erich listen to the cry of his lonely, desolate brother?

“He need not separate himself from his child,—he and his wife are welcome. They could live here under my roof, rich and independent, instead of leading a life of poverty and suffering. Of course, my dear Albert, you have told me of the change that has come over Erich, but I feel that perhaps his great poverty has been the cause of it. In happier sur-

roundings, he would be himself again, gentle, friendly, good-natured as he always was. As for me, I would greet him with a heart full of love.

“Brother Albert, I beg you to intercede for me and send a ray of hope into the darkness of my future. Go to Erich. Give him this letter. Join your pleading with mine and tell him that with longing I stretch my hands over the sea and beg him to come to my arms. In your hands I lay the joy of my future days. I trust you; do not disappoint me, brother.”

Albert folded the letter and cast a questioning look upon his wife and son.

“What are you going to do about it, father?” asked Oscar.

“I have not decided. I am waiting to hear whether you and your mother think I had better give Erich this letter.”

“Don’t give him the letter,” cried Oscar. “I don’t want my cousin Andreas to get my uncle’s money. I’d rather go to Cuba myself.”

His father laughed, and one could hardly tell whether it was a smile of pain or pleasure. Perhaps it was a little of both.

“I won’t object if you wish to try it.”

“I’ll go at once, if you’re satisfied. What a fine fortune it will make when yours and uncle’s are mine.”

"Oscar," cried his mother, "do you intend to leave me?"

"Be still," shouted the father, "it is time that you all should have your eyes opened, so that you may see what will befall us, if Oscar does not save us."

"What is it?" stammered the mother, pale as death, while she stared wonderingly at the father.

"Nothing good," responded Albert coldly, "for you have, by your extravagance, almost ruined me. I, whom the world counts a rich man, stand on the brink of bankruptcy, and poverty threatens us.

"This letter from my brother Andreas comes to my rescue. I must make use of it, in order to save us from the scorn of the world.

"You must go to Cuba, my son. Not as my son, however, but as the son of my brother Erich, the poor weaver, for whom your uncle in Cuba is longing."

"Why, father?"

"Because, if I sent you as my son, I could ask for no money. But if I wrote that Erich is satisfied to sell his son for the sum of twenty thousand dollars, Erich will have the disgrace, and I the gold.

"Besides, the money will save us from ruin. Otherwise we shall be poorer than Erich. Consequently I am driven to this deceit.

“In the end it will hurt no one, and it will help us. It will give you a life of ease and, at your uncle’s death, an immense fortune. Will you carry out this plan?”

Oscar was not so stupid and blind as not to see that his father’s proposition was base and wicked. But, instead of being steadfast in the right and denouncing the deception, he simply said that it would be a light matter to deceive the uncle.

Nothing more was said on the subject, and Albert sent a letter to Cuba by the next ship, stating that Erich was satisfied to part with his son, Andreas, for the sum of twenty thousand dollars; but that Erich felt himself too sickly a man to take the journey. The interest of the money, however, would enable him to live comfortably till death closed his eyes in sleep.

CHAPTER V

ON THE PLANTATION

The sun was fast declining, but the air was still warm, save that now and then a light breeze was wafted from the ocean. Andreas, the rich planter, swung to and fro in his hammock, which was hung from two immense marble posts. He lay with half-closed eyes and dreamt of his loved ones long since passed away. Suddenly he heard steps, and looking up saw his faithful servant and friend, Banty, bringing him a cooling drink.

"My honest, true soul," said Andreas, "you are always looking after my comforts. Come, seat yourself here, and let us spend a half hour together."

Andreas arose and seated himself at a table from which he could look through the tall palms out upon the beautiful landscape and the broad expanse of waters.

After his eyes had gazed with satisfaction on the scene, he said: "It will please my nephew here. A very hard nature his would be, if this wonderful wealth of beauty and grandeur would not melt him."

"I hope you won't regret his coming," said Banty.

"I don't know, Banty, but I can not believe that brother Erich, who was always so good and friendly, should have become such a hardened man. Such a sudden change does not seem possible."

"Because you're good, you think everybody is good," said Banty. "But I don't like Master Erich's answer to your letter. The idea of a father wanting to sell his only son for money!"

"Truly, truly, that is not nice," answered Andreas, as he supported his head on his hand. "But then I can forgive him. Erich is poor, has had many years of suffering and, I am sure, often wanted for food. But don't feel hard against the boy. Be friendly to him when he comes. I know that you are not pleased with his coming; for you think I might like him better than you. Don't think that I would let anyone come between us, you tried and true old friend. Now don't be silly, Banty."

He stretched out his hand, and Banty seized it, and said: "Good master, I do not fear for myself, only for you. If your nephew be like a son to you, all will be well."

"If my nephew does not prove to be as I wish and does not show a willingness to please me, then I will send him back; for we are not bound together with unbreakable chains, and ships pass to and fro all the time.

"If my nephew be worthy our respect and prove himself capable of being a friend to the laborers, Banty, the last days of my life will be as peaceful as this night which the setting sun illumines with her rays of purple and gold."

Daily, hourly, they awaited the boy. At last, Andreas said: "I am sorry that I did not go myself and get my nephew, but my brother Albert wrote me not to come, as it would only make my nephew vain."

While they were engaged in conversation, two riders approached the house. They reined in their horses and one of the riders, turning to the servant and pointing in the direction of Andreas, said haughtily: "Is that my uncle?"

Just then, Andreas raised his eyes and surveyed the men. A look of joy overspread his face, as he recognized his servant and cried: "Ha! Ha! you bring me my nephew." Then he hurried forward with outstretched hands to greet his nephew. With a stiff bow the boy returned the salutation.

"What, my boy," shouted his uncle, "jump into my arms. Your uncle bids you a thousand times welcome. May it be granted that we may spend many years of happiness together."

The uncle hugged his nephew. In one breath he asked if he had left his parents in good health, and if he had come willingly, and promised to be a

father to the boy, and make up to him for the loss of his parents.

Oscar listened half scornfully to the greeting, the questions and the promises of his uncle, and tried to return thanks for them.

“Don’t thank me, my boy. It is my place to thank you and your father. It is no light matter to part with one’s only child, in order to give happiness to a lonely man who up to this time has been so powerless to do anything to show his brotherly love. But the fault has not been mine.

“How often have I tried to stretch my brotherly hands to Erich, your father; but he always thrust them back. At least, so your Uncle Albert has told me.

“But you must help to enlighten me and tell me what has so changed my brother Erich. Come, sit down beside me and refresh my hungry heart with your tales of home. But wait! Before you begin, I must introduce you to one of my best friends, one who saved my life and to whom I owe all my good fortune. Banty, my boy, where are you hiding?”

Banty had been standing behind an immense palm tree whose broad leaves well concealed him and offered a good position to view the stranger. Long years in the company of his kind master had developed kind feelings in him, and he saw at once that the nephew did not return his uncle’s great warmth of affection. Then, too, he noticed

that the servant Romulus, who had conducted the nephew from the ship, was sad and depressed—something he had never been. So Banty became suspicious. “I’ll ask Romulus what happened,” he said to himself, just as he heard his master’s voice.

“Rejoice, Banty,” shouted his master, “my nephew is here.

“Shake his hand, Andreas. When you know my Banty as well as I know him, you will love him, too.”

Banty bowed before his master’s nephew, as Oscar, in a half-hearted manner, offered his hand. “Banty will do all in his power to please his young master.”

“Good,” said Oscar, “but my uncle will see to it that I shall not regret having come here. You had better go now, as I wish to speak to my uncle about my home.”

Banty bowed and turned to obey the orders of his new master, but his old master and friend called him back.

“You remain. You must not mind what this untamed boy says. You, Andreas, remember I am in earnest when I call Banty, my true friend; for he is neither slave nor servant, but a free man whom I love as a brother. Mark my words, Andreas. Now relate to me how things are progressing in the good city of Bremen.”

A glance that bespoke little good, blazed from Oscar's eyes, as he looked at Banty; but before his uncle noticed it, Oscar changed it to a friendly one, as he began to relate amusingly all his adventures on the way. He aroused his old uncle to hearty laughter. Even Banty was overjoyed as he saw his master in such a pleasant mood. Banty's expression seemed to say: "If you stay like this, perhaps we may yet become friends."

"But, you have told me nothing about your father," said Andreas.

"Oh, he is overjoyed, uncle. He was perfectly satisfied that my wish and yours coincided."

"Didn't he find it hard to leave you forever?"

"Not in the least. Why? You paid him for my loss."

The old man shook his head sadly, and said: "It pains me to think that brother Erich has so little feeling and tenderness for his child."

"O uncle, if you knew him you wouldn't be surprised," continued Oscar. "For he loves no one but himself. He is so proud, and his stupid boy—" then Oscar became silent, as a burning red surged over his face.

Uncle Andreas looked at him in astonishment and Banty made big eyes.

"What are you saying about his stupid boy?" asked the uncle. "Has Erich another son besides you?"

"Oh, yes, he adopted a beggar boy. Didn't my father tell you?"

"Not a word," answered the uncle, "but then Erich can not be as bad as he is made to appear. Now tell me about the stupid boy."

"Oh, he made me a lot of trouble," said Oscar, pleased that he had once more hood-winked his uncle. "But uncle, I am really very weary, and so I know you won't object if I retire to my room."

"Immediately, my boy," answered the good-natured uncle. Calling to Romulus, he said: "Conduct your young master to his rooms. Make yourself comfortable, my son. To-morrow will be another day, and after a night's rest you shall tell me all about your people. Good night."

When the door had closed and Oscar found himself alone, he said: "Blockhead that I was to speak of a brother, when I have none." But he comforted himself as he laughingly thought. "My uncle never suspected it as an untruth, and as for Banty, he hardly understood what we were talking about. At any rate, I must get rid of Banty. He is in my way; once rid of him, I think I can wind my uncle around my little finger."

With such thoughts, he soon fell asleep. He had laid many plans, but he had not reckoned that God's ways are not man's ways.

"Now, Banty," said the old man when he returned to the room, "how do you like my nephew?"

Not exactly satisfied with him, are you? But have patience with him. He does not seem so bad."

"Let us hope so, master," said Banty. "Perhaps he is good; perhaps he is wicked. Who knows?" Then he arose and bade his master good night.

The old man watched Banty go and said to himself: "It's plain that Banty is not pleased with my nephew. But Banty is jealous and suspicious. I am going to follow my own mind. I find my nephew a bright boy—and then he is young. One must make allowances for youth." Thus Andreas sat for some time musing and dreaming of a happy future.

CHAPTER VI

THE DISCOVERY

In the meanwhile, Banty had sought his own room, where he seated himself and began to review the thoughts which the day had brought. "Something is wrong," said he aloud. "Someone is telling an untruth, either Master Albert or young master. The letter said that Erich was very poor and very bad. Yet, new master says that he adopted a child. A poor, bad man would hardly do that. I don't believe it. Young master is not speaking the truth. Young master is not young Master Andreas. We shall see. Banty will use his eyes and ears, and soon he'll know the secret that young master is hiding."

Suspicious were now working in Banty's mind. They were, however, dark and undefined, and fruitlessly he sought for ways and means to bring light and clearness to his mind. He was positive that Andreas was not Erich's son—but who was he? Banty shook his head questioningly.

He didn't suspect him of being Albert's son, because Albert was supposed to be a rich merchant; and why should a rich man sell his son? If he wanted to send his son to Cuba, why couldn't he do it without being paid for it? But

that something was not right, Banty felt in his bones.

Of course, Banty could have written to Erich, and this would have been the shortest way to arrive at a correct conclusion; but Banty had never learned to write. So he was obliged to use his wits, for he had an opponent who was ever on his guard not to betray himself.

Banty would not have been so excited in the matter but that the future of his dear master and of the men on the plantation made him anxious.

Oscar had managed during the first week after his arrival to keep constantly at the side of his uncle, watching every opportunity to please and entertain him. Soon he won what he was looking for—his uncle's entire confidence. When this was attained, he went one step further and pushed Banty as far as possible from his uncle's sight. In this, too, he succeeded, for Uncle Andreas found such pleasure in his nephew's society that he did not notice Banty's absence very much.

As soon as Oscar saw that he had gained a firm foothold in his uncle's affection, he took from Banty the entire charge of the laborers on the plantation. He gave a daily accounting to his uncle of what had occurred.

Banty looked on quietly, while he kept his watchful eye open for every act. The young master was a cruel one. With a sad heart, Banty looked into the future, and wondered, if such

treatment could go on during his old master's life, how it would be when his dear master's eyes were once closed in eternal sleep. Banty left nothing undone that could prevent the sad conditions which seemed to threaten the future.

One day Banty spoke to his old master concerning his nephew's high-handed ways; but the uncle was now so perfectly charmed with his nephew that he could see no fault in him, and regarded Banty's complaints as mere acts of jealousy. So he said: "You must never speak to me against my nephew."

What was Banty to do, now that his dearly beloved master believed his nephew more than he trusted him?

The poor laborers were afraid of their new master, and they too, never dared to complain of him.

Oscar now hated Banty more than ever. He bent every effort to remove him forever from the presence of his uncle and win for himself the reins of government over the house, its owner and the plantation. Often he tried to speak against Banty to his uncle, but he made no headway; for his uncle forbade him, once for all, to speak any word against his faithful Banty.

Oscar excused himself, flattered his uncle and secretly hated Banty more than ever.

Banty felt this only too well, but was ever on his guard to do his duty. He had not succeeded

thus far in raising the veil which hid from him the secret he wished to learn. One day the thought leaped to his mind that he would go to Bremen, and there find out for himself all he wanted to know concerning the new master, who to him seemed an impostor. So he went to his old master and asked for a large sum of money. He received it without being questioned as to what he wished to do with it. The confidence which he felt his master still had in him shook his decision. He placed the money in a little bag which he hung around his neck and put off the journey from day to day.

One night Romulus came secretly to Banty and disclosed to him the fact that their new master had received from Bremen, a number of letters which he had quickly hidden in his pockets. To his uncle's questions he had said that no news had come from Europe.

"Strange, very strange," murmured Banty. "It is not all straight with him. He is not Erich's son. Perhaps Master Albert is his father. We shall see."

The next day, Banty managed to get near his old master, and asked, in an off-handed way: "What do they call Master Albert's son in Bremen?"

"Oscar! Why do ask?"

"I was just wondering," answered Banty, quite unconcerned.

That afternoon Banty walked through the plantation and saw his new master in the midst of some laborers, whom he was scolding in harsh tones. Banty quickly slipped up to the group, and cried in a loud voice: "Oscar!"

With lightning rapidity, Oscar turned his head in the direction of the call. A flaming red dyed his cheeks, as his eyes rested upon Banty, who had now reached his side and stood gazing at his new master's confusion.

"A pleasant evening to you, Master Oscar," said Banty, "although in this country you call yourself Andreas. Why don't you keep your right name? Oscar is a good name for the nephew of my master."

Oscar became more and more perplexed each minute, as he saw that his secret had become the property of Banty. In his embarrassment he forgot to deny the accusation, and when he came to his senses it was too late.

Banty turned in the direction of the house, fully resolved to tell his old master everything; but Oscar caught up to him, seized him by the arm and held him fast.

"Banty," said he, as he looked at the boy, his eyes full of hatred and revenge, "I must speak with you. You know my secret. It would be useless to deny it. But you must see that my life and your life hang in the balance, if you tell my uncle. Banty, if I fall, you fall with me; for not

unavenged will I let this grand castle of my hopes fall to the ground. Will you keep my secret, Banty?"

"I cannot be silent, not if I have to die ten deaths. Banty has but one life, but he has many brothers. You are cruel to my people and that must not be; and even if I must die for them, your uncle shall learn everything from my lips."

"Wait, Banty," pleaded Oscar, pale as death, yet with a look of deep-seated revenge; "listen to me! I have much to tell you of things which no one else must hear. When the fireflies glimmer to-night, and the moon casts her silvery light abroad, I will await you yonder on the Red Hill."

"When you have heard all that I have to say, if you still wish to tell my secret to my uncle—then I will not hinder you. But till then, be silent, Banty. Remember, I am the nephew of my uncle, even if my father's name be Albert and not Erich."

"It will be safer for you to be silent till you know all. What you wish to do to-day, you can just as well do to-morrow. I know that you will not betray me when I let you look into my heart. Will you meet me to-night, Banty?"

Banty hesitated, shook his head thoughtfully and at last answered: "I will come to-night and be silent till the morning."

"Do as you like after you have heard all," answered Oscar, as he uttered a sigh of relief.

"Don't let me wait too long, Banty. You will hear wonderful things."

Banty nodded and was off. Oscar watched him with a scornful laugh and murmured: "Be silent till to-night and then you will be silent forever. You shall not cut down the richly blossoming tree of my hopes."

Banty kept revolving the invitation in his mind, and said to himself: "Perhaps I had better take Romulus with me, for I didn't like Oscar's dark looks. Perhaps he means to do me harm." But he dismissed these thoughts and decided to go alone.

The sun had declined and night had drawn her sable curtains. In wonderful clearness the stars shone from out the dark heavens, the moon had risen in its glory and myriads of brilliant insects whizzed through the air, as Oscar stood waiting on the summit of the Red Hill for the arrival of Banty. With heavy steps, he walked to and fro; then he stood still, listened and murmured to himself from time to time: "I wonder what detains him?"

That Banty should come was his burning desire. He trembled at the idea that Banty had read his secret.

An hour fled. All was still save for the rustling of the tree-tops and the occasional hoot of the night-owl. No sound escaped his listening ear.

Suddenly he stood still, for steps and voices were nearing him.

"Ha! it is my friend Juan and his men!" he cried. "Welcome, Juan. So you did get my message? Thank you for coming. I see you have brought your men with you.

"But let us be cautious," he continued. "Banty will be here at any moment. Let us hide in the bushes, till he comes. There, now that we are concealed, we may talk in whispers, so that Banty will not hear of the trap we have set to catch him. I know that he will keep his word. When Banty comes, I will engage him in conversation and lead him to the edge of the precipice, where no escape is possible.

"At that moment your men can rush forward, bind him, carry him off, hide him on your plantation and ship him to some distant country, then I shall be safe."

Oscar became silent and arose quickly, as he heard hasty steps approaching. Out of the thick shrubbery Banty appeared, saying: "Master, I have kept my word. The way was long and I was delayed talking to your uncle."

Oscar turned pale with fright and said: "I trust you told him nothing?"

"Nothing, till to-morrow morning," said Banty.

"No, my boy, you will not tell him to-morrow morning. See," he continued, as he drew him to the edge of the precipice, "if you do not promise

to keep my secret, then I will throw myself over into the abyss below. Do you wish me to do that? Can you see the nephew of your friend die thus, without stretching out your hand to save him?"

"If you are innocent of the fraud you have practised and will be good to the men on the plantation, perhaps I will be silent."

When Banty had ended this speech, Oscar gave a signal to the men in the bushes to come forward. As Banty became conscious of the noise behind him, he turned his head and saw two men, who were rushing toward him like tigers. That one glance told him his danger.

He made a bound for the bushes, but it was too late. Two other men cut him off, caught him and in the skirmish that ensued, hurled him over the precipice. A loud cry escaped him—then the deep abyss swallowed him—and all was again still.

Oscar turned from the edge of the precipice where he had been gazing into the abyss. The shock of this unexpected exit had paled him, but his voice was firm, as he said: "I am guiltless of his death, and therefore I can truly say that I am satisfied that it ended so quickly. I think that from now on, I shall lead a happy life. My uncle is not well and, Banty's death will give him a blow. Perhaps in a year I shall be master of his millions."

"I think so, too," said Juan. "Come, the hour is late, and you must return. It must not be

noticed that you were absent from the plantation."

These bad people started homeward and their steps echoed in the distance. They believed that they were safe, for the silent night had concealed their deeds with her impenetrable darkness. But an ever watchful Eye saw all the plans and deeds of the wicked ones.

CHAPTER VII

THE WEAVER'S HOME

It was a beautiful summer day. With a bright and friendly light the sun sent her rays through the little windows of the weaver's home.

The chair upon which father Erich had always seated himself at daybreak and had so industriously plied his work, was now unoccupied. By many little signs one could tell that it had not been used for many weeks. A tiny spider, who had been the only workman in this shop, had spun her wonderful web across the corner of the machine and no one had disturbed her.

The reason for the many unusual signs lay in the fact that father Erich, now pale and thin, had been ill many weeks. This was the first morning that he could sit up. His good wife was much concerned about him and fixed his pillows from time to time. His boy Andreas, sitting at his side, embraced his father in his strong arms, resting the tired head on his breast.

Father Erich was thankful for the love of his wife and son; and the friendly smile that played on his pale lips expressed better than words could how their interest and sympathy reached his heart.

He tried to eat a little of his breakfast, then pushed it aside. With a weak voice, he expressed the wish that his wife and son should take the rest.

Andreas shook his head without saying a word and removed the dishes.

"I forgot," said the father, "that these are almost the last few crumbs that we have left to still our hunger." Then the smile faded from his face and a look of painful sadness took its place.

"Yes, yes, we have become very poor through my illness and it is very necessary for me to begin work again. But—these trembling hands, these weak arms, I fear they would hardly be able to set the shuttle in motion. It is a hard trial that has been put upon us." He became silent, shook his head and looked sadly before him. Andreas withdrew to one side and wiped away a tear, while the mother's lips trembled in suppressed grief that almost broke her heart.

Her husband did not know that she had been obliged to sell her furniture in order to get money for medicine. He knew not that, for weeks, wife and son had lived on bread and water, in order that the father might have extra things. And now, now there was no money for the next meal. Many a glance did the mother cast upon the weaver's stool which, perhaps, would be the next thing to sell.

"Don't worry, my dear husband," said she in a kindly tone. "The One who clothes the lilies of the fields and feeds the hungry ravens, will not forget us in the hour of our suffering and sadness. I am thankful that you have recovered. You will be able in a little while to make up for our losses."

Her words had such a good effect upon the sick man, that he looked into the future with hope and trust. He chatted for a while and then went back to bed, where he soon fell into a quiet, refreshing slumber.

Softly the mother closed the bedroom door and crept up to her son, who was gazing at his uncle's house over the street.

"It cannot go on like this much longer, mother. In one way or another we must get help. If you sold the stool, father would know our circumstances in a minute and it would break his heart. I have been thinking mother, that I must call upon Uncle Albert, tell him openly of our situation and ask him for a loan of money till father is better."

"Oh, my dear son, that would be of no use. He never answered your letters when you asked him to help us. He avoids us and our house."

"Let me try it, mother. I do not wish him to give me anything, only loan it. He cannot refuse me, if he has one spark of brotherly love."

Andreas took his cap, and with a heavy heart walked over to his uncle's house.

It was surely no easy test of filial love to visit the uncle who hated him. He pulled the bell. His heart beat faster and he trembled, as he was admitted. His uncle and aunt were seated at a table and gazed at the embarrassed boy in wonder, which soon turned into anger. Albert sprang to his feet and asked: "What do you want?"

With a scornful laugh his uncle listened to him coldly and said: "I have told you that I will not do the slightest thing for you or your father. Your father is a beggar and you are no better."

Andreas offered no retort to these words. His heart was full, not with anger, but with unspeakable disrespect for such a man. No, he had never dreamed that any person could treat another, especially a sick relative, a brother, in such a low, contemptible manner.

He cast upon his uncle a look that spoke louder than words his utter loathing of such a man and turned quickly to leave, never to enter again.

Self-controlled, he returned to his mother and in a few words told her all that had happened.

"What now?" sighed the mother.

"Now," responded Andreas, "I will do what I should have done long ago: I will seek employment."

"You, my boy, you are not strong."

“But I am young, and youth triumphs over strength. I will go to the wharf, where a pair of good arms are always useful.”

A tear rolled from her eyes. She had always pictured her boy, with his brilliant mind, his tender heart, his ambitious spirit, as reaching a high rung on life's ladder and becoming the staff of his parent's life and the helper of humanity. She clasped her son in her arms and a warm kiss rewarded him for his sacrifice.

“Go, my boy. All the good that you do for your parents will return to you.”

Andreas dressed himself in an old suit and hurried to the wharf to find employment. This accomplished, he worked from morn till night and each week brought his wages to his mother. Andreas was happy and under his old blue jumper his heart beat fast with joy.

He now felt that all the world must envy the happiness which the care of his father and mother was affording him. One thought alone depressed him: his father's slow recovery. “But I will have patience,” said Andreas. “God has helped us thus far and He will help us still, for He is the loving Father of the weak and the forsaken.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE SHIP IN PORT

One day Andreas was working as usual around the wharf and found no time to gaze about him idly. But, all at once, his attention was turned from his work, when a dreadful crash, like falling columns, and the loud shouts of people reached his ears.

He noticed that a number of piles had been broken by an in-coming vessel and had fallen to one side, and that someone had been hurt in the crash.

Always willing to assist, he hurried to the spot where he saw a dark-s'inned man lying helpless and bleeding. He knelt beside him, and laying the man's head on his knee said: "How can I help you?"

"Just lead me to some house, if you will be so kind," said the wounded man.

Helping the man to his feet while the crowd gazed at him, he asked, "Where shall I lead you? Do you know any one in Bremen?"

"Not a soul," answered the man. "I've just come from a far country."

Andreas thought a moment, then cast questioning glances at the crowd; but no one offered to

help. Should he be feelingless as they were and desert the poor man? No, he couldn't do a thing like that.

"Come," said Andreas, "we are poor, but still we have a roof over our heads and a soft bed; and I am sure my parents will let you share them both."

A look of thanks gleamed from the man's eyes as he pressed the hand of his benefactor. "You're a good boy and you will never regret that you helped me," he said in trembling tones.

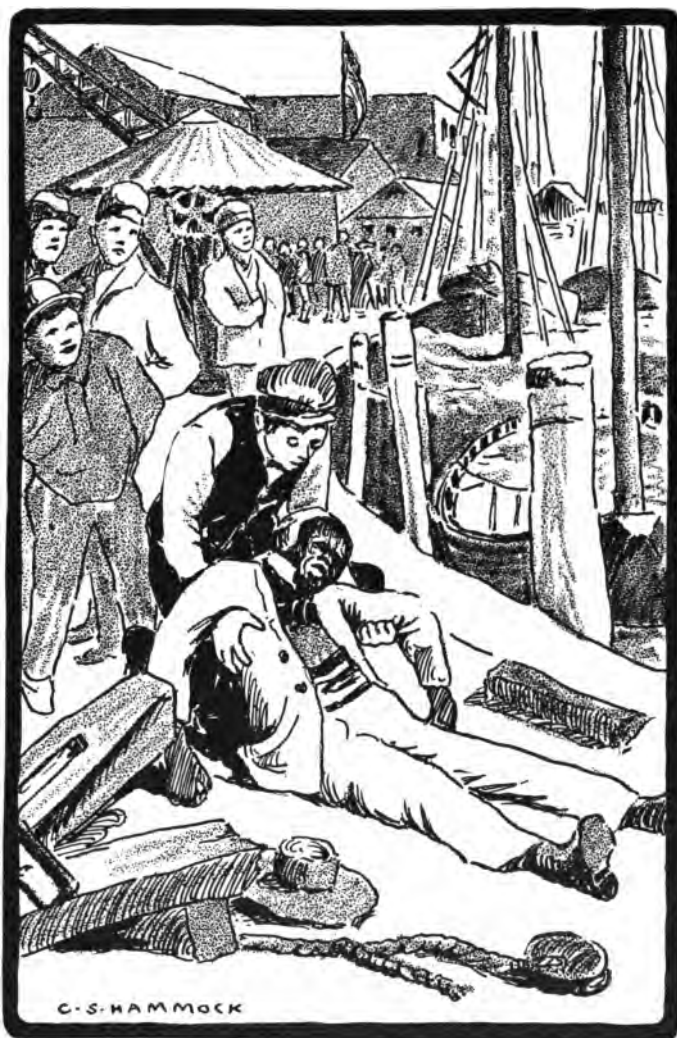
Andreas led the man through the crowd to his house, which was not far away. When they reached it, Andreas quickly explained the circumstances to his mother. She was ready to carry out the good work begun by her son. She helped lay the sick man upon the bed. A refreshing drink was then given to him, and his wounded leg was carefully washed.

Mother and son then stepped aside and spoke in low tones about a doctor.

"What can we do when we have so little money?" asked the mother.

These words reached the man's ears and he said, as he drew forth a purse, "Take as much as you need; I have plenty of money."

Andreas now hastened for the doctor, and while he was gone, the sick man looked about him, and said to the mother of Andreas: "How good of you to help a stranger. I just arrived from Cuba,



"Some one had been hurt in the crash."

where I've lived many years. My name is Banty." Then he closed his eyes, as if in pain.

Andreas soon returned with the doctor, who bound the patient's wound and said that in a week's time it would be healed.

After giving a few words of advice concerning food and rest and promising to call the next day, the doctor departed.

When father Erich awoke from his slumbers, he was made acquainted with the new member of the household. Banty was moved to sympathy for Erich and declared he would accept no further help from him and his family, unless they would agree to take his money. At last they consented and Banty paid for provisions, saying: "Banty will never forget the good that you have done him."

Andreas now left the sick Banty in the care of his mother while he sat down to rest after his day's work.

"How rich the man must be," thought Andreas. "Perhaps he is a rich planter's son in Cuba; but we would have cared for him just the same, even if he had been as poor as we are."

Many days now passed in undisturbed peace. Banty received attention from Andreas and his mother and could walk about alone. The father, too, had improved, for all he had needed had been the nourishing food which Banty had provided.

One afternoon, just as the sun was declining, father, mother, Andreas and Banty sat and talked under a tree whose thick foliage cast a welcome shade at the cottage door. Banty related many things about the island of Cuba, of his long ocean voyage and of a dreadful storm encountered at sea. All at once, he asked Erich if he had a brother.

"Yes, I have a rich brother, but rich only in lands and goods, not in brotherly love," replied Erich. Then pointing to the elegant house opposite, he said: "That is my brother's house."

"And he does not help you in times of sickness and need?" asked Banty. "He does not visit you to offer you help and comfort? How is that?"

"Oh, that is a long story," responded father Erich. "Some other time I will tell you about it."

"No, no, you must tell me now," said Banty, "and then I will tell you why I asked the question."

As Banty pressed anxiously for the information, Erich at last gave a full account of the situation. When the conversation touched upon Oscar, Banty asked, "Where is Oscar?"

"We don't know," said Erich, "but we imagine that he has been sent to a large city to prepare himself for his vocation."

Banty laughed to himself, but listened to the tale to its close and then said: "Did Master Albert never speak of your brother Andreas over the sea?"

"Never," responded Erich, intent. "Is my brother living? Do you perhaps know him? Oh, speak, for I have heard nothing from him these many years."

"First tell me, do you know anything about your brother Albert's sending his son to Cuba and a gift of twenty thousand dollars?"

"Not one word—I really don't understand you," said Erich, as he looked at Banty in surprise.

"Well, then, you shall hear all in a moment. But tell me, do you love your brother over the sea?"

"Why shouldn't I love him. Was he not always good and kind to me, when we were home in our father's house? A hundred, yes, a thousand times have we spoken of him, and my sincerest wish has always been that before my death, I might receive some word from my brother. How happy I should be, if I knew he were well and fortunate. Banty, do you know him? Can you tell us about him? If we be worth that much to you, oh, tell us of my brother, so far away."

Banty's head sank on his breast, as he said to himself: "How good it is that I came here; now,

I will put Erich to the test and see if he really loves Andreas."

Raising his head and looking sharply at Erich, he said: "I am very sorry that I cannot tell you much good news of your brother over the sea. He is well. He wanted to return to Europe long ago, but he couldn't. I would have brought him along with me, if I had known that you cared for him. He just told me to ask about you and send word to him in Cuba. If you loved him he would come and end his days at your side, but he couldn't pay you for your care of him."

"Say no more of payment," cried Erich, as he raised his moist eyes to Heaven. "How glad I am that he lives. Why did you not bring him along? Truly, we are very poor; but when I am again strong and able to work, I can earn enough to support us all. I will write to him at once, Banty. He must come—I will pay the money for his journey, if I must sell everything I possess, even this little house. Andreas—mother—you agree with me, I am sure."

"Certainly, my good husband," responded the mother, while Andreas shouted: "My Uncle Andreas lives? He must come to us." All were deeply moved, and Banty could no longer hide the truth.

"Oh, good people!" cried Banty in broken tones, "forgive me, forgive me. Master Andreas is not poor, but is worth millions. I know him

well and love him, too, and he is my best friend. I come from Cuba to take you back there, and you must accompany me over the sea. How Master Andreas will rejoice!"

Banty was beside himself with excitement. How he astonished them when he related to them all the deceit, hypocrisy and meanness that had been practised upon his kind master by Oscar.

"O Albert," cried Erich, "why did you do this? Oh, foolish brother, did you not know that there is an eternal Justice which brings wrongs to light and that all things hidden from the eyes of the world will be revealed?"

As his son was about to speak in vehemence against his Uncle Albert, the father interrupted, and said: "My boy, judge not. My poor brother Albert has certainly been punished through the knowledge that he has wronged me. May he be forgiven, as I forgive him."

"But," asked Banty, "you certainly will go with me?"

"With pleasure we will follow you, if only to show to my brother Andreas that we love him and wish to stand before him a living proof. For his wealth I have no longing. If he will but give us a little hut adjoining his home, we shall be satisfied and happy."

Many hours were spent in planning the trip and Banty was more and more sure every minute that he had been led into this family circle.

CHAPTER IX

THE TEST

On the veranda of his beautiful house sat the rich planter, resting his tired head on the cushions and gazing with dull eyes far out to sea.

He had changed considerably since last we met him. The grief over the loss of his Banty had gnawed at his heart and aged him. Many weeks had flown, and nothing had been heard of the boy.

Oscar tried to make up to his uncle for the loss of Banty, but his love did not fill the gap.

The planter had now become weaker each day, and at last he decided to write a will making Oscar the sole heir of all his property. Oscar locked the will in his desk and laughed in triumph. But dark clouds of a foreboding storm were rolling quickly over Oscar's head. He felt so happy in the thoughts of his future, that he decided to make merry with his friends in the city and departed for a week's outing.

One day while Oscar was absent, Romulus, the servant, said to his master who was sitting in his armchair: "Good master, a big ship from Europe has just come into port. I wonder if any one you know could be on it?"

"I wonder," cried the old man. "But it wouldn't give me any happiness, unless it were my Banty. I wonder why he left me?"

Just then heavy steps were heard approaching and a voice answered, "Because it was necessary for your good."

The planter raised himself, stared in blank amazement and cried: "That is my Banty's voice."

"Here he is himself," cried Banty, as he sprang into the outstretched arms of his beloved master.

"O my Banty, my Banty, where have you been?" was all that the old man could say.

Banty then related his adventures on the Red Hill; how he had been thrown off the precipice but had not been killed; how he had dragged himself to the wharf, and had used the money which the old man had given him to pay for his passage to Europe. Here he had found Erich and his family, and he told all that he had learned concerning them. The fact they had accompanied him, however, he kept a secret for the present.

In blank astonishment the old man had listened to the recital, and at last he said: "I see that Albert has dealt very deceitfully with me, but he is my brother and I must try to forgive him. As for Oscar, is it possible that all you say is really so, or can it be that jealousy has blinded your eyes?"

"If master wishes to be sure, let him test his nephew."

"But how?" questioned Andreas.

"Pretend that you are dead and see whether it moves your nephew to joy or sorrow."

"Banty, you have always been so honest, so true, so faithful, that I know you would not suggest such a trick, unless you had good reasons.

"I hesitate to do this, but if it brings truth to light, the end will justify our means. So I will agree to do as you have said. If I find that my nephew cares not for me, but only for my money, what grief that will be to me!"

"But then, master, you will win another nephew, a real Andreas," said Banty, with a sly laugh which his master did not fail to notice.

"What do you mean? Could my brother Erich have decided to send me his boy?"

"Suppose the real Andreas were now here?"

"Is it possible?" cried the planter.

"If his mother and father were here, too? What would you say then?"

"Don't raise my hopes in vain. Is it so?"

"Yes, Master Andreas, your brother Erich and his wife and son are now in Cuba. They await your pleasure in the city of Havana."

"Romulus," cried the planter, "harness the horses. I must ride to Havana. What news! What joy! What luck! Quickly, Banty, help me.

I shall die from impatience. Ha! ha! Erich, my brother, I shall see you again. I shall lock you in my arms."

The servants sprang from all sides to render assistance, but at a gesture from Banty, they withdrew and Banty addressed the old master thus: "If you love me, Master Andreas, then listen to my words. You don't know your brother and his family, after this long absence. Let them all hear the same news. Then see how they act, and decide whether they love you or your money."

The old master struggled against his impatience, but at last he said: "Let it be as you wish, and may this test be for our good."

Banty led his beloved master to his bed, covered him carefully, drew the blinds and darkened the room. Then he dispatched messengers to bring home the absent ones.

Almost an hour had passed, and the old master was filled with expectation and dread. Many a time he sighed, "O Banty, how it would pain me were I to find that my nephew had deceived me, lied to me and cheated me."

Suddenly all became still in the darkened room, for the expectation and uncertainty of the next hour filled their minds with perplexing thoughts.

The hoof beats of galloping horses soon roused Banty into action. Stepping to the door, Banty saluted Oscar, who had just arrived.

"You wretch," cried Oscar in fright, "where did you come from? I thought I was rid of you forever. How dared you return?"

"Quiet yourself, master. I cannot help what you thought. Here I am alive, as you see. Let us not argue further, for I have sad news for you.

"Your uncle rests peacefully. He is stretched out stiff. His eyes are closed in sleep. So, now quietly pass into his room and view him thus for the last time."

"He is dead. Then why all this sadness," shouted Oscar in a loud voice. "Rather rejoice with me, for now I am the real master."

With heavy tread, he followed Banty into the darkened room, gazed a moment at the outstretched form of his uncle and said: "At last you are gone. Now, old man, I am the sole heir of all your money, your property, your treasures. A happy accident has at last freed me from you. Away now with this mask which I have worn, this mask of deceit. From now on, what a happy life I shall lead, free and rich." Then he left the room and closed the door.

Each word, as it fell upon the ear of the old master, had torn his heart strings. As soon as the door was closed, Banty whispered: "Wasn't I correct in what I said?"

"O Banty, my Banty, if he treats my memory thus, when I have showered everything upon him,

what love can I expect from my brother Erich and his family, for whom I never did anything."

"Let us see," answered Banty, "I will conduct them here."

The old master, although he had firmly resolved to control his feelings, could not resist peeking just a little and taking a look at his brother. He saw him pale, his eyes filled with tears and a very sad expression on his face. Pallid and trembling, his wife and son followed.

"There lies your brother," cried Banty, "you should have been here sooner."

"Oh," sighed Erich, "my dear Andreas, at last the long-looked for moment has arrived; and now, now I must see you cold, pale and torn forever from me."

"Very sad," said Banty, "for now you must go back over the sea without money. Master Oscar will get it all."

"Be still," cried Erich, "did you believe for one moment that greed for gold brought me here? A brother I sought, and now he is gone."

"Well, I'm sorry, for you can't stay here. Master Oscar won't permit it. He will think you're waiting for money."

"Let him think what he likes. I will remain here until I have followed my brother to his last resting place."

"I can listen no longer in silence—I thank you all for your love for me," moaned Andreas, as he slowly raised himself from his bed.

Erich and his family stood aghast, as if struck by lightning. But the spell was broken, when the planter sprang from his bed and with assurance of his love for them, begged them to forgive the trick which had been played to test them all.

Long, long did Andreas and Erich gaze at each other in silence. Then at last, speech returned to them; but excuses and explanations were unnecessary, for brotherly love made them understand each other fully.

Uncle Andreas was so delighted with his real nephew Andreas and the father and mother that at last he said: "The grief that I have experienced cannot equal the joy of this re-union. I will revoke my former will, and from henceforth all that I own I share with you. You must promise never to leave me, and may we spend many years of happiness together."

The members of this happy family were too overcome with joy to speak, but they nodded assent and their eyes spoke eloquently.

"My brother Albert and his son, Oscar, deserve severe punishment," said Uncle Andreas. "They both sought to do me harm; but their wicked thoughts, their deceit and slander have been unveiled, and I will leave them to the pricks of conscience."

In the meanwhile, Oscar had invited many friends to join him in the reception room, where he wished to rejoice with them over his inheritance.

As Banty entered the room, Oscar cried: "Ha, ha, now I have you in my power, you sly fox," and with these words he hurled Banty to the floor. Suddenly his voice failed him, his face paled, his eyes became fixed and fear and terror overspread his features, for the door of the reception room had been thrust open and there on the threshold, stood his Uncle Andreas.

"My uncle!" he cried in terror.

"Yes, your uncle has returned to hold court here in this room and to cleanse his home from the poisonous viper that has crawled into it."

Oscar could scarcely keep from falling, for he felt as if a great wind were blowing him away.

His uncle drew closer to him and said: "Oscar, you have been very wicked, but truth has brought all your wickedness to naught. From henceforth, you can no longer be a son to me and my doors are forever locked against you. Return to your father, who has acted toward me like an enemy, and not like a brother. Tell him your fate. When your hearts are filled with regrets for your wickedness, then ask God for forgiveness, and forget not that above the stars hovers an everlasting Justice which never permits the plans of the wicked to reach fulfillment."

With these words, the old master withdrew, followed by Banty.

On the following day Oscar received a sum of money from his uncle and returned to Europe. Thus ended his play of deceit and slander.

For many years after, Erich and his family, together with the faithful Banty, lived on the plantation in Cuba and vied with one another to make each day happier than the last, while Master Andreas basked in the sunshine of their smiles. Seldom did they speak of their relatives Albert and Oscar, over the sea, for it only brought with it thoughts of pain and sadness.

One day, however, Erich received a letter from Oscar, who said that his parents had lost their all in unfortunate speculations.

Erich, who had become very rich through the kindness of his brother Andreas, was now able to send a yearly allowance to his brother Albert which was sufficient to support his family in comfort.

Thus did Erich repay the snubs and sneers of his one-time rich brother Albert, in lifelong deeds of kindness.

COMRADES

CHAPTERS.

- I. THE RUSTIC SEAT.
- II. FRIENDSHIP.
- III. THE REQUEST.



Legally Adopted.

COMRADES

CHAPTER I

THE RUSTIC SEAT

Stately and grand stood Baron Westerman's mansion, mirrored in the little bay which bordered it on one side. The glorious sunshine sparkled in its windows and streamed over the well-kept graveled walks which led to the wooded parks. Clouds of fragrance rose from the beautiful flowers, the birds gave their music freely and all was steeped in light and splendor. It seemed as if here fortune and happiness could forever make their home and that those who dwelt within the mansion could know nothing of pain or sorrow.

On one of the garden paths, there walked a twelve year old boy. In his thin little hands he held crutches, and his cheeks were pale and hollow. Something was written in his face that spoke of sleepless nights, distressing pain and sadness.

This boy was Harry, the only son and child of Baron Westerman, and the future heir of all his wealth and grandeur. From birth his life had hung by a thread and many a time it seemed as if the little spark must go out. The doctor's wisdom and his parent's watchfulness guarded

him, moment by moment, and they spread their protecting care like wings over him.

Harry was so weak that usually he could not walk without assistance; but some days when he felt a little stronger, he used but one crutch. This day he needed them both. Not wishing to be followed by a servant, who was to him a reminder of his weakness, he was permitted to go about alone. Many people were employed in the parks and gardens who liked Harry and would have lent him aid at any moment. They would have made him well, too, had it lain in their power.

As Harry continued his walk, his crutches dug deeply into the ground, so heavily did he rest upon them. He was watching two cranes that had drawn a fish from the water and were fighting over its possession. Then, suddenly, he stopped to gaze at a butterfly.

"How pretty you are!" said he admiringly; and a look of longing passed over his face, as he watched its flight.

"How I wish I could go as quickly as you do, but I can only creep and crawl."

Harry had no idea that he was being watched by the assistant to the gardener, a boy, who was looking at him from behind a tree. He had been sent to cut grass, but he wasn't doing it; for the moment he spied Harry, he felt sorry for him and forgot all about his work.

This boy, Frank, had already passed his fourteenth birthday. He was an orphan and had been sent out into the world to earn his living as a gardener. He was very much dissatisfied with this kind of work. He had always hoped that he might be permitted to study, but since he was poor and alone, it was not to be thought of.

When he first entered the service of the head-gardener, he had admired the beauty and elegance of this place and a feeling of envy had crept into his heart, as he said to himself: "If I were as rich as these people, I could gratify my every wish."

But the next day he had seen Harry, the little Baron, in the garden. At the first glance his heart had been pierced with pain and he said: "This poor boy always has to use crutches. What a weak body he has and what a sad face. I can see that he suffers much pain." Then he raised his hands to measure his own height and strength, and again he spoke aloud:

"I am a king compared to this cripple, for I am well and strong; from now on I will never grumble at my lot, but be satisfied where God has placed me."

From that hour on, he was seized with a desire to know Harry, but with only a nod and a pleasant greeting had he succeeded thus far.

By this time he knew the spot where Harry loved to sit. Under the shady maple tree, near

the waters of the bay where a rustic bench had been placed; here Harry spent many an hour. Here the birds brought their messages of love and cheerfulness and sang to him of their travels in regions far away.

To-day, Harry was striving with all his might to reach his beloved spot, but he could go no farther. His steps became slower and slower. Tired and burdened, he halted, and leaned against a tree. His arms dropped loosely to his sides, and a deep sigh escaped his lips. This sound it was that reached Frank's ear as he listened behind the tree.

A feeling of pity surged over Frank, and quickly dropping his sickle to the ground, he darted like an arrow to Harry's side.

"Wait, I will carry you to your rustic seat," said Frank, in a kindly tone, as he stretched out his arms, ready to suit his actions to his words.

"No, no," said Harry, brightening, "you must not carry me. I do not need to go there to-day. I can wait till to-morrow."

"But you'd like to go to-day, wouldn't you?" and with these words Frank lifted Harry into his arms, and although Harry kept saying: "Let me down. I'm too heavy for you," still Frank went straight along, till he reached the seat. He placed the cripple upon it with great gentleness, as if he thought that Harry might break in two.

The exertion made Frank very warm and the perspiration stood in beads on his brow.

"See!" said Harry, as Frank took his handkerchief to wipe his face, "I knew that I should be too heavy for you, but you wouldn't listen."

"That's only the heat," said Frank, with a reassuring look. "You weren't a bit heavy. I'll work about here, so that I can carry you home when you're ready."

"Don't go," said Harry. "Sit down and talk to me." For, although he was a Baron's son, he felt himself no better than any other boy, even his father's servant.

Frank's eyes beamed with joy at this opportunity, and he seated himself on the grass, as Harry began to talk.

"Here's where I like to sit and look at the blue sky. Sometimes I wonder how it will look up there when I go to Heaven."

Big tears stood in Frank's eyes, as he thought how often good little Harry in his weakness had neared the gates of Heaven. He quickly dried his tears, lest Harry should notice them, but Harry was too busy drinking in the beauty of what he saw beyond.

Tired at last, Harry raised himself with difficulty and said: "Now I should like to go back, but you mustn't carry me. Just help me a little, and then I can get along."

Frank paid no attention to these words, and as tenderly as a nurse, he lifted the little cripple and carried him on and on, till he reached the castle gate, where he set him down.

Harry thanked him, and said gently: "We could be friends. I have no friends here and neither have you. What do you think about it?"

Frank didn't dare say anything, so he only thanked him. Then he went back to his work, the work which he had so hated—but now he was glad, and thanked God, that he was able to work.

CHAPTER II

FRIENDSHIP

Each day Frank watched for Harry, to show him a plant or a newly opened flower. Often they walked arm in arm through the garden, as if they feared they might lose each other. Soon friendship spun her delicate threads from heart to heart.

The good head-gardener tried not to notice Frank's neglected work, for he saw that Harry found pleasure in Frank's company, and that satisfied the old man.

One morning, Frank heard that Harry was not feeling well and would have to lie abed for several days, in order to gain a little rest and strength. Frank felt this disappointment very keenly, and every hour or so he would walk around the castle, hoping to get a glimpse of his friend; but no such luck awaited him.

In the course of a few days, the head-gardener received orders to send a certain blooming cactus plant to Harry's room. The father thought that this would give the boy something to amuse him, while the mother was engaged with company.

The gardener called Frank and directed him to carry the plant at once. Frank was in such a

hurry that he left his rake lying cross-wise in the road, where anyone could fall over it, and ran as if his life depended on it, to carry out the order.

When he reached the castle door, the servant bade Frank take the plant himself. "Third door to the right," said he. "If Harry doesn't answer you, just open the door and put the plant on the table."

Red with excitement, Frank ascended the stairs, wondering if he would get the chance to see Harry. Now he stood at the third door, right-hand side. Not hearing any answer to his second knock, he opened the door and walked into the room to set the plant upon the near-by table. Suddenly Harry's weak voice fell upon his ear: "Don't you see me, Frank?"

Looking in the direction of the voice, he saw Harry lying on a beautiful bed, surrounded by every luxury, but all alone. Happy, he hurried to Harry's side. A chill crept over him as he saw the white face. Frank could scarcely speak. At last he said: "Do you feel very sick?"

"No, I have no pain, I'm only tired. Tomorrow I'll see you again in the garden."

Poor Frank was so sorry for his little friend, that he would have done anything to make him well. He quickly showed him the cactus, and they both admired the beautiful yellow blossoms.

"Put it on the table," said Harry.

Frank obeyed and at the same time tripped over a book lying on the floor. He picked it up and handed it to his friend.

"Just lay it on the table," said Harry, in mournful tones. "I wanted to finish the story, but my hands were too tired to hold the book."

"Oh, may I read it to you?" asked Frank, whose eyes were beaming with joy. He thought no more about the rake lying cross-wise in the road, but only about this little cripple and the pleasure he could give him. The whole world was wiped out and only he and Harry lived.

"If you please," said Harry, whose eyes looked like big balls of light.

Frank took the book to finish the story, and when at last the end had been reached, Harry said: "Wasn't that nice! Read some more."

Just as Frank had finished the third story, Harry's haughty mother looked in at the door.

"Oh," said she to herself, "that's the garden-er's boy. I don't mind his being here for to-day, but I don't like such a friendship."

At last Frank stood ready to go, while Harry begged him to come again.

The next day Frank saw Harry's parents in the garden, so he quickly plucked a handful of flowers which he intended to throw into Harry's room. It wasn't an easy matter, for the window was very high. After much loss of time, he finally climbed a tree that stood quite close to the house. The

first flowery message flew into the room all right; but when the second reached the room, it struck a man on the head. This man happened to be Harry's father, who had just come in from the garden. Putting his head out of the window, he said to Frank in a friendly tone: "You had better come in next time and bring us the flowers; I think that will be the better way."

Frank was pleased with these words, for he had feared a scolding instead. Following the Baron's invitation, Frank found himself a daily visitor, and friendship poured her full measure of joy into the lives of these two boys. Frank entertained Harry so well, and was such a comfort to him, that the little cripple soon gained enough strength to be about once more.

One day, Harry sought Frank in the garden. Not finding him there, he went to Frank's room, where he found him poring over some big, heavy books, and said:

"What are you reading?"

Frank told him that he was anxious to learn, and so he studied whenever he had a chance, as he wished some day to be a doctor, or a lawyer, or a professor. Harry nodded as if he already saw his best friend's wish gratified, and wondered what he could do to help him. This thought went with Harry day and night, and even followed him into his dreams.

CHAPTER III

THE REQUEST

Months passed, and soon the first yellow leaves lay upon the garden walks. The time had come when God wished to call little Harry home. Poor little Harry had never been able to hop or skip or dance, like other children. Such joys had been locked away from him. As the years went by, it became steadily worse and worse, so God deemed it best to end Harry's misery here, and let him sing with the angels above.

Day by day, Harry grew weaker, but he did not feel unhappy, for he had often pictured Heaven to himself. He only felt sad for his parents and for Frank. His body had remained dwarfed, but his mind and his beautiful soul had grown. He knew and felt that his father and Frank would miss him very much.

These thoughts gave him no rest. After many sleepless nights, he was seized with a violent fever. His nurse put cooling cloths on his head and rubbed his hands. Nothing helped, for he had no pain, only an excited brain. At last a comforting thought came to his mind. The fever gradually lessened, and Harry rested quietly.

One day when Harry's father had seated himself at his bedside, and all was still, Harry broke the silence, and said: "Father, if I make a wish, my very last wish, will you promise to grant it?"

His grief-stricken father could have cried outright, but he controlled himself and said: "I will grant your wish, my boy, if it lies in my power. Only tell it to me."

It seemed to the father as if the sun would never shine again. Looking into the questioning eyes of the child whose end was so near at hand, he felt that he would do anything to make these last hours happy for his son. Again he said: "Speak, my boy and it shall be done."

"Well, my dear father, I have no brother, and I want you to make Frank my brother, and when I am gone, treat him as your son. Let Frank study to become a great man and promise to love him as you love me. For Frank is good and true and I love him devotedly."

"I promise you all that, my boy."

The joy written in Harry's face was like unto that of an angel's. He sank upon his pillow. Weaker and weaker he grew; slowly his life was ebbing away, and the angel of death was coming to take Harry with her.

All this time Frank went about sad and down-hearted grieving over the coming loss of his very best, his dearest friend on earth.

As Frank stood at Harry's bedside one day, the poor cripple opened his eyes and it seemed as if he were looking far, far away—as if he saw the wonderful sights and was preparing his wings to take his flight to the stars. Then he opened his lips and they heard him say: "Father, mother, brother, I must go." Then he sank upon his pillow; the angel kissed him, and his eyes were closed forever.

Harry was laid to rest. Sadness filled the house; for now that he was gone, every one felt the need of him. All the sunshine seemed at once to have fled. His father grew old, and his mother sad and humble.

Out in the garden Frank worked among the flowers. Many a tear fell upon them, as he carried them each morning to Harry's grave.

Days and weeks went by, and at last the father decided to fulfill Harry's wish and take Frank legally into the household.

"I really couldn't put another in his place," said Harry's mother.

"But we must," said the father, "for I promised Harry to carry out his last wish."

After another week or two had passed, Frank was adopted into the family; and as quick as was possible, he was sent off to a distant school to study. The change that had come to Frank was so sudden and unexpected that he could hardly understand what had happened; but as time went

by, he grew accustomed to it, and his heart was filled with gratitude.

Often he would say: "For all this I must thank Harry."

As the holiday season was drawing near, the Baron said to his wife: "Now we must permit our adopted son to return home."

Very unwillingly his wife consented, and Frank returned.

At first he felt strange in his rich surroundings; but when he saw the sorrow which Harry's parents still felt over their loss, he made up his mind to help them forget their grief. A bridge soon spanned itself from heart to heart, and they found in Frank a second son, who well deserved the home he had won.

THE MESSAGE

CHAPTERS.

- I. THE DANGER.**
- II. THE PILGRIMS.**
- III. ANXIETY.**



THE MESSAGE

CHAPTER I

THE DANGER

Many, many years ago there lived in an old castle a brave noble Knight, named Theobald, with his pious wife, Ottilia. To all those who might be in need of it, he generously offered his help and protection. It afforded him great pleasure to be of service to humanity and he considered this joy ample reward for his efforts. His wife co-operated with him in his undertakings and made liberal donations to the poor. They both visited the sick in the huts of the neighboring valleys, and those in need of shelter found a place of refuge in their castle.

Their only child, Agnes, a girl of eight, likewise showed a sincere kindness and friendliness to the poor. She knew no greater joy than to give pleasure to others. Far and near the Knight and his family were loved and respected by the people.

On a beautiful, bright summer day, Agnes and her mother strolled out into the garden and seated themselves in a shady bower. Together they sewed industriously on a dress intended for a poor orphan girl. Everything in the garden was still and peaceful, but for the occasional song

of a locust upon the branch of a nearby tree, and the soft splashing of the water from the fountain.

Suddenly something flew into the leafy vine. Mother and daughter, very much startled, looked up and saw a huge bird of prey, with outspread wings, hovering above them. But as soon as the bird spied the two human beings, it hastily soared higher and flew away. Poor Agnes was so frightened that she could hardly trust herself to look around and see what had flown into the bower. Her mother reassured her, and said: "Don't be afraid; it can't be anything more than a little bird seeking refuge." Then, as she searched among the leaves, she called out to her daughter: "See! it is a snow white dove. In its fear it flew directly behind you." Taking it in her hand, she cast a searching glance at her daughter and said: "What shall we do with it? Oh, I know—I'll roast it for you to-night."

"Roast it?" cried Agnes, in fear and surprise, and she stretched out both her hands, pleadingly, as if she wished to save it from such a dreadful fate. "Oh, dear mother," said she, "you were not in earnest, I know, when you said that. This poor bird flew to me for rescue and how could I kill it? See how beautiful it is; and its feet are as red as coral. How its heart flutters! It looks at me with its trusting eyes and seems to beg timidly. 'Don't hurt me.' No, dear bird, I will not hurt you. You shall not have flown to me in

vain. You shall have everything that will give you comfort."

"You are right, my dear child," said her mother tenderly, "you have spoken according to my own thoughts. I only wished to test you. Take the dove and feed it. No unfortunate who comes to us for help must be neglected. We should sympathize with the needy and be merciful to all God's creatures."

As soon as possible, a pretty little red dove house was built. Agnes placed it in one corner of her room, and trained the dove to live in it. Daily she supplied food, fresh water and clean sand. In a short time the dove became accustomed to her and trusted her. Whenever Agnes opened the door of its house, it would fly about and eat corn out of her hand. Little by little, it became so tame that she could freely let it fly out of doors and it would always return to her.

Just at this time, Agnes' father returned from fighting a band of brigands, who had infested the country and filled the people with terror. Proud and happy, he related his success in routing most of these marauders. The others had scattered in fear, so that peace and safety now reigned in the country. He was more than pleased to be in the happy family circle again and rejoiced with Agnes over the dove, the new member of the household, whose beauty and cleverness Agnes

described to him. The conversation was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of a lady and a child, both dressed in black and both very pale. The Knight and his wife arose and graciously welcomed the strangers to their home.

Between tears and sobs, the woman said: "Pardon me for this intrusion, noble Knight. Although I have never met you before, I come to you for help. My name is Rosalind Brandt, and this child is my daughter Emma. Possibly you may have heard of my difficulties. My husband, Albert Brandt, died last year of wounds received in battle. Since then I have been sorely oppressed by two of my neighbors. Envy has changed these men from friends to enemies. Both of them are encroaching on my lands. My husband must have expected such a change of condition, for, with his dying breath, he spoke your name, and said: 'Trust in God and in the good Knight Theobald. Then no enemy will have power over you.' Help me, O Knight. What would become of me if these men should seize my lands and leave me but the stones of my castle walls?"

Emma, who was about Agnes' age, drew near the Knight and said tearfully: "Good Knight, be my father and don't turn us away."

The kind, brave knight, engrossed in thought, stood looking earnestly at the group, when Agnes broke the spell and said: "Dear father, please

have pity on these people. When my dove sought refuge here from the bird of prey, my mother said to me: 'The unfortunate who seek help at our hands must not be forsaken.' Surely this lady and her child deserve as much help as my dove. Save them from these bad men who are like birds of prey."

The Knight was moved by his daughter's words, and said: "My dear Agnes, with God's help, I will assist them. My silence was not due to hardness of heart; I was merely considering what plan I could take to save these good people."

The Knight then engaged Rosalind in close conversation and asked her every detail of the case. Meanwhile his wife prepared a meal for her guests, while Agnes and Emma withdrew.

The Knight, now fully acquainted with the facts, said: "As I see the situation, the right is all on your side. To-morrow, I will lay the matter before these men, and you may remain here with your daughter until I return."

The meal was then served, but owing to the general uneasiness, all partook of it but lightly.

The next morning, the good Knight Theobald mounted his spirited charger. Bidding his family good-bye, and assuring them that he hoped to return in a few days with very welcome news, he rode away on his self-imposed errand.

Agnes was more than delighted to have the companionship of Emma, even though it were

only to be for a short while. She took her through the house and showed her all her toys, and above all her pretty white dove. The two children soon became the best of friends.

In the course of a few days, Knight Theobald returned. "Good news," cried he, as he entered the house. "Your enemies have consented to desist from their unjust demands and have promised to molest you no longer. At first they disregarded all my arguments, but when I threatened to fight with them, they soon relented. Be of good cheer and fear nothing. No enemy of yours shall glean your fields, or cut down the trees in your woods."

Rosalind's depression now forsook her and approaching the Knight with a light heart she said: "God, the protector of the widows and orphans, will reward you for the good you have done for me and mine, and I trust that you will accept my humble and devout thanks for the great service you have rendered me."

Preparations were now made for their return. The two children felt the separation very keenly. As Emma had shown such a great fondness for the dove, Agnes volunteered to loan it to her for a week; after which time it was agreed that the dove should be permitted to return. As it had now been fully trained to take flights, it would be an easy matter to send it back.

Agnes brought the dove from its perch. For a moment she pressed it against her moist cheeks, and then tremblingly presented it to Emma, who hesitated to accept an offer that meant such a sacrifice to Agnes. But at last she yielded and promised to give the dove the same care that Agnes had so lovingly bestowed upon it.

As soon as the guests had departed, Agnes began to grieve over the absence of her pet; but her mother reproved her, and said: "See how willing your father was to forfeit time and pleasure in order to help this widow; you should be kindly disposed, too, and be willing to give joy to a friend. A person who does not learn early in life to share with others what he holds best and dearest, will never learn to love God's people, and must fail to please God." Agnes dried her tears and promised to wait patiently for her dove's return.

CHAPTER II

THE PILGRIMS

Rosalind Brandt and her daughter Emma once more lived peacefully and contentedly in their castle, which lay secluded in the heart of the forest. Late one night, two pilgrims came to the castle gate and asked for a night's shelter. Each wore a dark brown mantle and carried a long staff. The page announced their presence to Rosalind, who gave orders to have the pilgrims conducted to a room where every comfort should be accorded them.

Before leaving on the following morning, the pilgrims related to Rosalind many pleasing incidents which had occurred during their wanderings and questioned her concerning the country in the immediate vicinity, and were especially interested in Knight Theobald, whom they praised extravagantly. The older pilgrim said: "Were the Knight's castle not so far out of our course, and could we hope to find him home, we would certainly pay him a visit."

Rosalind assured them that their way lay nearer the castle than they had reckoned, and, that Knight Theobald, who had only just returned from a week's absence, was undoubtedly at home now.

“Well, that pleases me,” said the older pilgrim. “It will afford me great pleasure to pay him a visit. There are a number of things I wish to discuss with him; so we will lose no time, but start at once.”

Mother and daughter sent their kindest greetings to Knight Theobald, his wife and daughter. Emma modestly pressed a few coins, which her mother had previously given her, into the hands of each pilgrim, and exacted the promise that they would tell Agnes that the dove was quite contented.

Rosalind and Emma bade the pilgrims good-bye. Under the guidance of a servant from the castle, they now resumed their journey. The servant followed them whistling gaily. The pilgrims paid no heed to him and walked along absorbed in thought. At last, the younger pilgrim broke the silence and engaged his comrade in conversation, but in the Italian language. The servant, Leonardo, now a lad of fifteen, had been brought from Italy as a child by Rosalind's husband. Although the boy was now fairly well trained in the English language, he had never forgotten his native tongue. He listened attentively and was about to impart to the pilgrims his great joy at hearing the Italian language once more, when suddenly the conversation filled him with horror and dread.

He gathered from what the pilgrims said that they were not real pilgrims, but had only dressed themselves as such; that this section of the country was well known to them; that they belonged to that band of brigands which Knight Theobald had so gallantly routed; that they were hungering for vengeance; that in the guise of pilgrims, they intended to enter his castle for a night's rest; and, finally, that they purposed to arise at midnight, murder the Knight and his family, plunder his castle and then burn it to the ground.

As they descried in the far distance the Knight's castle lying between two wooded hills, the older robber, named Lupo, said to his companion, Orso: "There is that dreadful dragon's nest of Knight Theobald, who brought such destruction to our band. He shall suffer for it, like a martyr. We will bind him and burn him alive in the flames of his own castle. If we succeed in our undertaking, we shall be rich, indeed, and can live without work. Let us not forget to take his handsomest clothes for ourselves. You can wear his golden chain; I'll take his watch set with precious stones. We will flee to some distant country where no one knows us, and where we can pose as great men and live well on our new-found riches."

"That would be fine," said Orso, "but I don't know, somehow I feel a certain fear."

“What—fear?” said Lupo. “Has not everything so far been well planned and executed? Have we not enough helpers? Just as soon as we gain an entrance into the Knight’s castle, we will light three candles and set them in the window; immediately there will come to our aid seven strong, brave men who have patiently been waiting for this sign for several nights now. These we will admit through the small garden gate which is so easily opened from within. One of them who was once a servant in the castle, but was discharged, knows every passage and room. Together we shall be strong enough to kill the sleeping members of this household. Have courage—we shall certainly succeed.”

The good Leonardo grew cold, as he listened to their disclosures, and tried in every way to conceal from the pilgrims the fact that he understood their language. He walked steadily behind them, picking a flower or leaf here and there, and whistling softly. In his heart he prayed devoutly that the wicked scheming of these bad men might be brought to naught. He secretly vowed to conduct them to the castle and at once divulge their plans to the good Knight.

As the robbers were still discussing their plot, the older lost his footing and fell down an incline, where a stout thorny bush stayed him. The thorns tore his clothes and Leonardo saw that beneath the robber’s brown coat, he wore a scarlet

jacket, a shield and a sharp pointed dagger. Leonardo pretended not to notice these things. The wicked old robber drew his coat together and cast quick side-glances at Leonardo, with eyes sharper than a hawk's.

Suddenly they came to a gorge through which a mountain stream, swollen by recent rains, rushed wildly. Two huge rocks projected from either side of the stream, over which lay a long narrow pine tree which served as a bridge.

The old robber said to his comrade; "It is possible that this boy may have understood our conversation; besides, he may have noticed my dagger, and he may have his own opinions concerning us. I will give him a sudden push when he crosses the stream so that he will fall into it. Then we shall be rid of him."

Poor Leonardo trembled from head to foot. He stood still several feet from the bridge and said: "I wouldn't trust myself to cross that stream; I feel dizzy now."

Then Lupo said: "Don't fear, boy. Come here, I will carry you over." He went toward Leonardo with outstretched hands. But Leonardo ran from him, crying, "Oh, no, let me go! We might both fall in. Even if I should get over safely, how could I return? Let me go home. You don't need a guide any longer. The rest of the way lies straight ahead and you can't fail to find the castle."

Attributing the boy's fear to the roar of the wildly rushing stream and the narrowness of the bridge, which awed him, too, Orso said in Italian: "I am sure this stupid boy has understood nothing. Even if he noticed your dagger that wouldn't mean anything to him. Suppose we let him go."

"Just as you wish," said Lupo, "but for the sake of our future safety let's destroy this bridge. Then, even if the boy understands our plans, he can't interfere with them. Without the bridge to get over, no message can be sent before we finish our work."

The two robbers left the boy standing, without thanking him for his kind guidance, and continued their way over the bridge. On reaching the other side of the stream they shouted: "Boy, you were right; that is a dangerous bridge. Half of it's slippery from moss and the other half's decayed. One could easily lose one's life on it. So that no accident may take place in the future, we are going to destroy it. The people will soon replace it." They then loosened the tree and it fell with a splash into the water and was carried away in the mad rush of the foaming stream.

As soon as the robbers reached the bend in the road and were hidden by the shrubbery, Leonardo started on a wild run for home to impart the dreadful news to his mistress; for he knew of no one, far or near, who could prevent this dreadful calamity.

CHAPTER III

ANXIETY

Little did Rosalind dream of the danger which threatened the good Knight Theobald, her friend and protector. Emma constantly referred to the pilgrims and the pleasant stories which they had told of their wanderings. Toward evening, as the sun began to sink from view, and a nice, cool wind was gently wafted over the hilltops, mother and daughter walked arm in arm toward the valley, to survey their estate. Suddenly there came toward them in full haste the boy Leonardo, overheated and breathless. "O gracious lady," he gasped, wringing his hands, "I have dreadful news to tell you. Those two men were not pilgrims, but robbers and murderers. They intend to murder Knight Theobald and all his household, plunder his castle and burn it to the ground." The boy was so excited and exhausted, that he could say no more. He sank beneath a tree overcome with emotion, and it was some time before he regained his composure.

Rosalind and Emma were sorely overwrought by this news. "What sorrow would befall us, if we should lose such a good man and such a noble woman," cried Rosalind.

‘My dear little Agnes,’ wailed Emma, pale with fright—‘if they murder her and her parents, I’ll die from grief!’

‘Emma,’ said her mother, ‘hasten to the house and I will follow as quickly as possible with this boy. Call all the servants together. I will send them to warn the good Knight. They shall ride to his rescue as men never rode before.’

Emma fled, quick as a deer, and soon reached the castle gate. To her call of alarm, all the servants quickly responded. Emma told them briefly the situation. They were horrified, called down vengeance on the pilgrims, and lamented as if their own castle were being consumed by fire.

By this time, Rosalind and Leonardo had joined the group. ‘Why do you stand here, idly gazing and lamenting?’ cried she. ‘Prepare yourselves, make haste to the rescue, one and all.’

‘That is impossible, gracious lady,’ said the old, gray equerry, ‘the pilgrims have too great an advantage over us. They have reached the castle by now, and their deadly work has most likely begun. Think, our journey would take several hours and it is now late. How could we hasten on a dark night along a road impaired by heavy rains? Upon the very best horse I would not trust myself until dawn.’

Rosalind wrung her hands in grief. ‘Oh,’ cried she, ‘if Leonardo were not so exhausted and

almost sick, I know that he would undertake this task. But you," turning to Martin, another servant, "you are young and fleet-footed, suppose you try. The foot-path is one-third as long as the broad road. I will reward you with gold and land, if you reach the castle in time."

"It is impossible," he said. "Who would be able to find the narrow bridge on such a dark night without falling into the stream."

Then Leonardo interrupted and said: "The only bridge that spanned the stream is gone now. The robbers removed it. One would have to have wings to fly over it."

"Wings!" cried Emma, and her eyes gleamed with joy. "Now I know how to send a message to the castle! Good Knight Theobald told me that I had better keep the dove indoors while I had it, lest it should fly right back home; and that, even though the distance were great, it would find its way. So, now, let us send a little message fastened to the dove and it will certainly carry it to the Knight."

"How clever!" "What a bright idea!" "Such a happy thought!" they shouted, one after the other.

Emma hastened to get the dove. Meanwhile her mother hurriedly wrote a note on a small piece of paper, which she rolled up and attached carefully to a red ribbon around the dove's neck.

Then, Emma, followed by the servants, carried the dove out into the open, and let it fly.

The dove soared high up into the clear air, swayed and circled for a long while, and at last directed its course to the Knight's castle. Everybody was overjoyed, and sent thousands of good wishes and prayers after the dove. No ship heavily laden with precious freight, ever went forth carrying with it the prayers, hopes and fears of people more sincere than these.

Rosalind and Emma were filled with grave doubts. "I wonder whether the dove will reach the castle in safety?" said Rosalind. "If a bird of prey should seize it in its talons; if the way should prove too long and delay it in its flight; if it should not gain admittance upon its arrival,—what a dreadful fate would befall the Knight and his family."

Mother and daughter seated themselves at the window facing the Knight's castle, and gazed steadily in that direction with yearning eyes and fervent prayers. As the night deepened, their fears increased. A red light of the reflected fire would soon tell them that the dove had not reached its destination in time. They remained at the window; and sleep was an unknown guest that night. Midnight had now passed, a fierce wind swept through the forest, and the world was wrapt in darkness; still they noticed no glowing light in the direction of the castle.

At last the dawn broke over the sleeping earth. With joy and heartfelt thanks, mother and daughter greeted the glorious morn, after the long weary vigil of the night. Rosalind and Emma knew full well now that the robbers had not succeeded in their plans to lay the Knight's castle in ashes; but they still feared for the lives of the good Knight and his household. "Oh, what I would give for some news from them," said Rosalind. "All my treasures would not be too much."

But what took place that night was still a secret to them.

It happened, however, that just as the sun was about to sink, Knight Theobald, his wife Ottilia and Agnes, free from all care, had seated themselves at the table near the partly opened window overlooking the beautiful grounds, when a page announced the arrival of two pilgrims. The Knight gave orders that every courtesy should be extended to them and that they should be told that he would greet them after they had refreshed themselves. The page left, and Agnes was delighted at the prospect of soon listening to the pilgrims recite the tales of their wanderings.

When the meal was over, Agnes startled the family by shouting, "Oh, my little dove!" Sure enough, there it was—swaying before the half-open window and pecking at the window pane, as



"Oh, my little dove!"

if it were asking for entrance. Agnes admitted it and immediately it flew upon her shoulder. "See what a pretty, red ribbon it has around its neck," said Agnes, "and it has a small roll of paper fastened to it!"

"I do believe it is a little message. What funny ideas children do have," said her mother.

The Knight removed the paper and read the words: "In haste," upon it. "Sure," said he laughingly, "of course this calls for haste." So he unrolled the paper and read further. "What do you think?" he cried.

"What is it?" shouted mother and daughter in great surprise.

The Knight read aloud: "Most gracious Knight! The two pilgrims who this night will visit you are two robbers, members of that famous band which you routed. The elder is named Lupo, and the younger, Orso. They carry shields and daggers under their pilgrim disguise. This very night they intend to murder you and your entire household, plunder your castle and burn it to the ground. With your clothing and jewels they intend to adorn themselves. Several of their accomplices await the following sign: three lighted candles are to be set by these pilgrims in one of the windows of your castle to signal the moment when entrance will be possible. Heaven grant that this dove may reach you in time to save you. No other means of communicating

with you was possible. By sending a mounted messenger at daybreak acquainting us of your safe deliverance, you will allay our grave fears. Your grateful Rosalind."

"This dove is certainly a messenger from Heaven. How like the dove that brought the message to Noah in his Ark! Let us be thankful for this wonderful escape."

The Knight bade his wife and daughter retire to another room. Buckling on his shield and sword, he summoned several of his stalwart followers and gave them orders to be in readiness. Then he sent word to the two pilgrims to meet him in his library. With great humility and many obeisances, the pilgrims entered the room. Lupo then addressed the Knight: "Most gracious Knight! How fortunate we consider ourselves to meet, face to face, a man whom the world honors for his nobility and bravery, his devotion and self-sacrifice to the cause of the poor."

Knight Theobald became irritated by these hypocritical words and interrupted the speaker by saying: "Who are you?"

"We are poor pilgrims," they answered, with exaggerated humility; "we lately arrived in this region and now are slowly wandering toward our native city."

"What do you call yourselves?" asked the Knight.

"My name is George," said Lupo, "and my cousin, here, is named Albert."

"What seek you in this castle?" continued the Knight.

"Nothing but a night's lodging. To-morrow with the rising sun we will be up and off."

"You deceivers!" cried the Knight in thundering tones, as he drew his sword from out its sheath. "You are named neither George nor Albert; but you, you old rascal, are Lupo, and you, you young rascal, are Orso. You are not pilgrims, but robbers. You are seeking no lodging here, but your errand is rather to murder and plunder. The punishment for such deeds shall follow you. Through fire and sword shall you pass. What? You intended to wear my clothes and jewels? Never." Calling to his men, he cried, "Seize them; tear their pilgrim disguise from them so that I may view them in their true colors; disarm them, chain them, and cast them into the dungeon below."

The servants laid hands on the terror-stricken robbers, cast them chained into the cells and bolted the door.

At last, when everything was still, the younger robber said, rather softly: "Now we must remain here for the rest of our lives! I wonder how the Knight knew every detail of our intended movements. Do you suppose that boy who guided us understood Italian, and betrayed us?"

“Then he must have flown into the house,” said Lupo, “for I took every precaution and watched the castle gate every minute. No one crossed the threshold after we arrived. Certainly there is some mystery about it all. That detestable old Theobald, he alone is the cause of all our misfortune.”

The misguided Lupo could not see that his own evil deeds were the sole root of his troubles.

Orso, the younger one, began to weep and lament and to upbraid Lupo. “Oh, if only I had not put my faith in your false promises. You led me to believe that I should lead a care-free life filled with every luxury; and now nothing awaits me but a dreadful death. You always contradicted me when I said our ways were wicked, and that we should surely receive a just punishment. My conscience kept upbraiding me and warning me of the dreadful consequences I should have to suffer. Oh, if I had only trusted that small voice within me. What good can all the plunder do me now? Had I worked at any hard labor, wood-splitting, stone-cutting or gardening, and thereby earned an honest living and kept a clear conscience, how happy I should be now. But the highest Judge who sees and punishes all misdeeds, has laid his hand heavily upon me and thrust me into this dismal prison. Nothing more remains for me in this world.”



**“The robbers could see the overwhelming number
of their assailants.”**

In the meantime, the servants had carried out the Knight's orders, which were to place three lighted candles in one of the windows, as soon as darkness descended. A host of strong, brave servants waited in silence for the approach of the accomplices. One of the servants had donned a pilgrim's garb. Hour after hour went by. All the men grew impatient, for midnight had long since passed. At last a soft knock announced the presence of the robbers. The gate-keeper slowly opened the door. The robbers, seeing the servant in pilgrim's garb and mistaking him for their friend, said in a subdued voice: "Are we in time?"

"Just in time," replied the gate-keeper in a whisper. "Be very quiet. All of you come in at once."

The seven men, well armed, crept in quietly. When the last man had entered, the door-keeper turned the key in the lock and put the key into his pocket, as he shouted: "All ready now!"

Then the servants concealed behind posts and furniture, sprang forward and seized the robbers. At the same moment another door opened and Knight Theobald, fully armed and accompanied by his followers, entered. The light of the moon suddenly shone with great effulgence, so that the robbers could see the overwhelming numbers of their assailants. They were so overcome that they had no time to draw a sword. It was an easy

matter to chain these men and imprison them in the cell with Lupo and Orso, there to await their fate.

Quiet was at last restored, and the Knight and his good men retired for a short respite, after their night of weary waiting. It would have been far easier for them to have fought in open battle, than to wait for the unfolding of the plans of such treacherous, murderous men.

Meanwhile, Rosalind and Emma waited impatiently and with deep concern for some message from the Knight. As the day passed and no one arrived, mother and daughter became greatly agitated and distressed; and each hour seemed endless and unendurable. At last, toward evening, as Emma once more peered through the small window of the tower, she discerned a vehicle coming toward the house, accompanied by many mounted attendants. Emma rushed down the spiral stairs, and called to her mother triumphantly: "They're coming, I am sure they are coming!" Mother and daughter then hastened down the road to meet the visitors.

The Knight and his family had started early that morning to bring personally the news of their fortunate escape and bear their grateful thanks. The moment Knight Theobald spied Rosalind and Emma, he sprang from his horse, and Ottilia and Agnes alighted from the carriage. They greeted Rosalind and Emma most affectionately and

thanked them for their warning in a manner so hearty, that words fail to express it.

Their happy reunion after such a threatening danger was celebrated by a feast. Everybody rejoiced; and the faithful Leonardo, who waited upon the guests, was invited to relate in detail all that had occurred on his journey with the pilgrims. He was only too pleased to tell what he knew. Nor did he fail to remember how the younger robber, Orso, had pleaded with the older one to spare Leonardo's life. "For that reason," said Leonardo, "I would beseech you to act leniently with him, as he showed some sympathy for me." All voted this plea worthy of consideration.

At the end of the meal, Knight Theobald raised his silver goblet and cried: "Long life to Emma. Her happy idea of sending the dove as a messenger, saved our lives."

"Oh, no," said Emma modestly, "to Agnes all the honor is due for lending me the dove."

"Let us be thankful," said Rosalind, "that we have been blessed with such unselfish children. But do not let this praise fill you with vanity. Look at the poor orphan boy, Leonardo, who in grateful appreciation of us, his benefactors, almost lost his life in his haste to carry the news of this danger. He stands here unrivalled, for he has done more than any one of us."

“Indeed,” said Knight Theobald, “you have spoken truly.” Turning to Leonardo, he said: “I will make you my armor-bearer; for your truth and your sincerity ennoble you and give you the first claim to that rank.”

Ottilia, deeply moved, said tremblingly, “Let us not forget your departed husband, the friend of all humanity; for it was he who, moved by deep sympathy, brought this orphan boy to your castle. Had he not shown this mercy, how would it be with us this day?”

“It is true,” said Rosalind, deeply touched. “The good that my husband did, has been returned to us a hundredfold in the joy which your rescue through Leonardo has afforded us. Besides, all the good that Knight Theobald did for us could not possibly remain unrewarded. He who helps the needy will receive help in time of need. Let us thank God for His care in all the little troubles, as well as in the great trials of life.”

TO THE RESCUE

CHAPTERS.

I. THE FAWN.

II. THE ACCIDENT.



“Oh, you poor little fawn !”

TO THE RESCUE

CHAPTER I

THE FAWN

Harold, who was a kind-hearted, good-natured boy, took great pride in helping his poor tired parents; so, on this particular morning, we find him busily engaged gathering wood in the forest, as he had often done before.

When his basket was full, he swung it on his arm and walked slowly homeward. Soon the weight of the basket so wearied him, that he sat down under a shady tree to rest. Here a cooling spring gushed from the mountain-side, and the little forest songsters overhead made the air peal with their music.

While Harold sat dreamily enjoying this quiet nook, there came from out the thicket a beautiful deer, with her little fawn at her side. At first she stood still, glanced about her timidly and bent her ears backwards and forwards. Then she moved slowly onwards, lifting her delicate feet carefully over the brambles and fallen branches, while her fawn tripped gently after her. They both stopped at the spring to drink, and then the fawn began to frisk and play, while the mother nibbled at the leafy vines.

Harold held his breath and sat as still as if he were made of wood, while his heart beat fast with joy.

"What beautiful creatures these are," thought he.

But hark! What was that?—Not far from where he sat, he noticed sudden sparks and smoke, and heard a report that was re-echoed like thunder from the mountains. Harold sprang to his feet at a bound, and hardly knew where to turn.

The fire and crash had been a shot. The deer, which had been pierced by a bullet, rolled helplessly on the ground, and the fawn, frightened and trembling, rushed behind the bushes.

Instantly following the report, a boy appeared, pounced upon the fallen deer, and cried: "Ha! ha! that was a fine shot." His father soon joined him, and together they carried the deer to their home.

"Those men are hunters," said Harold. "How cruel they have been. I wonder where the fawn is?" Just then it came from its hiding place among the bushes, and looked anxiously about for its mother. Harold crept cautiously up to it, and just as it was about to dart away, he caught it.

"Oh, you poor little fawn," said he, as he stroked it gently, "how I pity you. Now you have no mother and must starve to death. You have," said he, as he felt about in its mouth, "not even

a single tooth with which to clip the grass. You don't know how badly off you really are."

In the meantime, Morris, the old huntsman from the lodge, had happened along. As he noticed Harold with the fawn, he stepped behind a large tree, to hear what the boy was saying. Harold still held the fawn, and looked lovingly down at it.

"What big, innocent looking eyes you have, and how beautifully your back is marked," continued he. "Even your black nose is pretty. Let me carry you in my arms. I really don't know what to do with you, but I'll take you to Morris, the head-huntsman. He'll know. I hope he won't kill you right off. At any rate, we shall have to see him, for you belong to him and I dare not carry you away. But I will beg for you, real hard. Perhaps he will let you live and give you something to nourish you."

The old huntsman, who had heard every word, chuckled to himself.

As Harold arose and was about to go away with the fawn, he noticed the huntsman and was startled. But the honest Morris said, in a kindly tone: "Don't be afraid, my good boy. I won't hurt you, or the fawn. I overheard every word you said to the poor animal; and since you like it so, I will make you a present of it. If you will take a little trouble, you can easily rear it yourself."

Harold was happier now than he had ever been before. Hanging his basket on one arm and hugging the fawn closely with the other, he walked beside the huntsman, listening carefully to each word he said.

"Take two parts of milk and one part of water and mix them. Let the fawn lap this, and feed it three times a day. In a little while, it will be able to find food for itself, out in the fields."

Filled with joy, Harold hurried to his home, placed the wood in the woodshed, and walked briskly into the house with his newly-found pet.

When his mother saw the animal, she said: "What a bad boy you were to remove it from its forest home. Take it back where you found it, so that its mother may not grieve over its loss."

"But," said Harold, "listen to me, mother," and he told her all about the fawn.

"Well, that explains it," said his mother. "Perhaps there will be a little to spare for the fawn, and I am sure you will be willing to share your portion. It shall certainly not starve, even though we are poor. There is no greater good than to help those in want, and surely if we help this fawn it will be charity."

Each day Harry fed his pet, and it grew steadily stronger and stronger, and often it followed him to the forest where he gathered the wood. When he returned with his basket each day, everyone, especially the children, rejoiced to

see the dear little fawn, and they would follow Harold until he reached his home. This home was a dingy looking house which was of almost the same age as the hundred-year-old oak tree that shaded it. The passers-by could not help but think, as they gazed at the little, old house: "How poor the occupants must be!"

Yet for miles around Harold's father was the envy of everyone who knew him. Many a person said to him: "Stephen, how can you be so happy when you are so poor?"

Stephen would answer: "I am not as poor as you think. I have a rich Father in heaven. He lets me have what I need; and under my old shabby coat, I carry a treasure which I would not give for thousands of dollars."

"Pray, what is that?" they would ask.

"That treasure is a conscience at rest. Then, too, I am well and strong enough to earn my daily bread. My threadbare coat may be mended, perhaps," he continued, as he looked at the patches at the elbows, "like the old thatched roof of my hut, but still it is all there, and keeps me as warm as the handsomest coat in the world. Why then should I be sad? My mother taught me three things: First, 'Love God'; second, 'Support yourself with your own hands'; third, 'Be honest.' These three rules are the secret of my happiness, and he who follows them will learn, as I did."

His wife, Christine, could not at all times agree with her husband's ideas, for she found her poverty very trying.

"You worry about nothing," said Christine to him, one night, as he sat whistling at the door of the house and at the same time sharpening his sickle for use on the following day.

"No, not about anything," answered Stephen. "That would be silly. Haven't I just sharpened my knife for to-morrow's use? What more is there to worry about?"

"Maybe you don't know that we haven't a dollar in the house," said Christine. "It might be possible that some trouble could come to us; then what would we do for money?"

"Well," said Stephen, "if we were to have money ready for every possible want, we should need a big chest. Many people have considerable money laid by, and it is well they have. But we are very poor people and have just enough for our daily wants. Should need come, God will send us help."

"Oh," sighed Christine, "so many people are sick in the village and we could get sick, too."

"That is possible," answered Stephen, "but worrying about it won't keep us well."

"Then, too, we can't leave a cent to our Harold, if we should die," continued his wife.

"What? Nothing?" cried Stephen. "There's where you err." He laid his sickle on the ground,

rose, and said with earnestness: "I purpose to leave him something better than a bag of gold. I mean a good training and a good education. Do you call such riches a poor legacy? Let us train our boy well and I shall have no fear for him. As happy as I am in my poverty, will he be, too. A happy heart is a good possession; and if this fail us, of what good is riches? If we trust in God, do right, and are light-hearted—we shall be happy."

The days went by, and Christine tried to follow her husband's good example. Even the boy profited by it.

CHAPTER II

THE ACCIDENT

One day Stephen was cutting some trees out in the forest. By accident, a tree fell before the other woodchoppers expected it would. It struck Stephen and threw him to the ground. Upon examination, it was found that his right arm had been broken. The men bound his arm with their handkerchiefs, and as he was faint from the shock, they lifted him carefully and carried him home.

His wife and son were very much alarmed and Harold hastened at once to call the doctor. The latter soon reached Stephen's bedside and set his arm in splints.

Day after day the doctor called, and the arm, instead of getting better, grew gradually worse and worse, until at last it seemed as if it would have to be cut off.

The family was so disturbed over this condition, that Christine made up her mind to call in the most prominent doctor in the city, although she knew his fee would be large. But he was too busy to return with her. He just gave her a little medicine, and said he thought that that would relieve the arm.

Sad and weary, Christine returned to Stephen and said: "Now, I see that it is a misfortune to be poor. Could I have offered the doctor a goodly sum of money, I am sure he would have come with me."

"Don't talk so," said Stephen. "Don't put so much trust in dead gold. God will help us; and should I die, He will help those whom I leave behind."

Poor Harold grew paler and sadder, day by day, and his poor fawn was obliged to play by itself. It ran about up the mountainside and down into the valleys. There it was spied, one day, by a little boy named George, who, in company with his father and uncle, had wandered into this valley.

George shouted for joy, as he watched the fawn and saw it walk into the little hut as if it belonged there. He little dreamed that wild animals of the forest could be tamed. He begged his father's permission to enter the hut and get a closer view of the fawn.

The request being granted, he walked timidly into the hut. There he saw Harold feeding the fawn, and said to him: "Excuse me for intruding, but I did want to see your fawn."

Just then the two men reached the hut, and George's father was the next to enter. He stood still on the threshold, when he saw the invalid. He begged the sick man's pardon for entering

and asked the nature of his illness. Expressing his regret at the accident, and with best wishes for a speedy recovery, he was about to go when George's uncle, the Major, entered.

The Major was a kind-hearted, sympathetic man and was at once filled with pity, when he saw the helpless invalid. He drew a chair close to the bedside, and said, as he looked about the narrow, clean room: "It must be hard to lie here sick and helpless. Have you no one who can aid you or lend you money?"

"No, I am a stranger in this village. I was born in Waldengrund."

"I know the place very well," said the Major. "What is your name?"

"My name is Stephen Werner."

"Stephen Werner!" cried the Major, as he took Stephen by the hand and looked at him steadily, "are you the Stephen who helped me one night when I was attacked by some highwaymen?"

But Stephen replied, "I do not remember ever having seen you before."

"Surely, you have forgotten," and turning to George, who was playing with the fawn, he said: "Come, both you and your father must listen to this story."

"When I was eighteen years old, I rode past the forest of Waldengrund. I still had a few more miles to ride, before I reached my journey's end.

“As the sun was about to sink in the west, a loud shout arose from the forest: ‘Halt! halt!’ It startled me for a moment, and then suddenly pistol bullets whizzed past my ear. I gave rein to my horse, but the robbers shouted again and again: ‘Halt! halt! or we shoot!’ I paid no attention to the call, for I was sure that I could make my escape. The road, however, was so badly broken and uphill that my horse tripped. I flew over his head and fell to the ground.

“Just as I was about to spring to my feet, one of the robbers, with drawn sword, stood over me, and it seemed as if my last hour was drawing near. At that moment, a young man with a bundle of wood on his back and a big stick in his hand, came from out the forest. It took him but a moment to throw his bundle to the ground and beat the robber with his club. Groaning with pain, he dropped his sword and ran for the woods. The brave man who helped me that day, is this poor man here.

“Tell these people, weren’t you the man who helped me then?”

“Yes,” said Stephen, “I remember the encounter well now, and I can plainly see that velvet coat of yours, which was torn and splashed with mud, as you fell on the ground. Your horse, too, a chestnut mare, was so injured in the right fore-foot and limped so badly that you had to make the rest of your journey by foot; and I accompanied

you. But I should never have known you again. At that time you were not so strong as you are now, nor so ruddy."

The Major agreed, and greatly moved, said: "I am your debtor. Forgive me for not paying my debt years ago. I did write your name in my note book; but soon afterward I joined the army, and I never had the chance to seek you out, although I had the best intentions."

"But," interrupted Stephen, "how did you find my hut to-day?"

The Major then told how they had accidentally spied the fawn and had followed it. "It led the way to this house, and I think my presence is needed here this morning," he said.

Stephen showed the Major his wounded arm, which was in a very bad condition, indeed.

"You saved my life once," said the Major, "and I have been sent here by a Higher Power to help save yours. You shall have the best doctors. No money shall be spared; and your every need shall be gratified."

Christine, who had been preparing a broth for her husband, entered the room just as the Major was offering his help. She thanked him heartily, and said: "Now I know that my husband was right, for he always said: 'God sends help when it is needed. Trust in God is better than gold.' Now it has come true."

Soon the doctor arrived, and with a grave expression on his face, said: "I am just in time; had I come a few hours later, you would have lost your arm. However, before six weeks have passed, I trust you will be well."

Such a happy household as this never existed. Every want was supplied. Each day was filled with new hope and new joy, and each moment gave birth to gratitude to God, and His agent, the Major.

Soon Stephen Werner was able to be about; and, little by little, he regained the use of his arm, but it never became really strong. The good Major, who had amassed considerable money, settled a yearly amount upon Stephen, who was thereby able to support his family, and to educate his son beyond his greatest hopes and dreams. For God watches and sees the good we do; and the works of helpfulness and charity are rewarded.

THE RUINED CASTLE

CHAPTERS.

- I. THE MOUNTAIN HOME.
- II. THE FOX.
- III. THE TOWER.
- IV. THE STORM.
- V. THE INSTITUTION.



“He discovered a young fox down in a deep hole.”

THE RUINED CASTLE

CHAPTER I

THE MOUNTAIN HOME

On the south side of a lofty mountain, Rupert Brenner, the charcoal-burner, had built his home. His low, wooden house stood on a projecting rock that overlooked a narrow, green valley.

A clear, rippling brook flowed swiftly by, gaining in volume and strength in its course, and carrying up-rooted trees and debris along in its wild rush. On all sides forest-clad mountains stood like mighty sentinels.

One saw no evidence of man's work here, except the wooden foot bridge that spanned the stream and an occasional ridge, hewn in the precipice, which afforded a passageway to the Brenner house. A little farther on, a picturesque old stone bridge indicated the way to a distant mountain, from whose summit a tower and the half-fallen walls of a ruined castle could be distinctly seen.

In this solitude the Brenner household, consisting of two children, Niklas and Thecla, and their parents, spent their days in blissful serenity and harmony. For weeks at a time no human being entered their abode. Hares and squirrels made their daily visits, and often at midday a timid

deer would drink at the brook and hastily return to her home in the thicket.

Rupert Brenner found constant employment in the woods, hewing the trees, cutting them into small pieces and converting them into charcoal. His wife, Hedwig, was always busily engaged with some household duty. Niklas cared for the few goats that clambered about on the steep mountain sides; while Thecla guarded her little lamb, which gamboled and frisked from morn to night.

The children thought that nowhere could it be lovelier than in this retreat. To them this forest and these mountains were the world. Here, under the guidance of their wise father and mother, they found a vast stage, on which they could study the wonders of the earth, direct from the hand of God. A wealth of wild flowers covered the mountain side; and from these variegated blossoms they made wreaths and bouquets in profusion to decorate their house and table; in fact, their home looked more like a floral bower than a charcoal-burner's hut.

The vegetation near the stone bridge was so luxuriant that Niklas often led his goats to feed there. While they were grazing, he made good use of his time gathering odd specimens of plant life, which he would carry home and press, and sell to the tourists who visited that region from time to

time. The money thus collected he gave to his father.

Niklas found his greatest pleasure at eventide, after he had housed his goats, visiting his father in the woods. It gave him great joy to remain there overnight in the little hut, beside the pile of burning wood. From there, he could see the walls of the old ruined castle, surrounded by the trees, which looked so dark and black, and the tower, now glittering in the last rays of sunlight.

One day he said to his father: "I should like to know how it looks within those castle walls. The next time I go in that direction with my goats, I will climb to the summit, so I may get a closer view."

His father warned him, with uplifted finger, and said: "Don't do it, Niklas. Those walls are very old, and might tumble down at any moment. A dreadful accident might befall you there." Niklas heard and meant to remember.

"But how has it happened," asked Niklas, "that so solid and beautiful a castle has fallen into such a horrible condition?"

His father then told him about a wicked duke who had once lived there, and who had plundered the homes of the unsuspecting people in the neighboring country. His description filled Niklas with awe, as he pictured the robber, captured, bound and imprisoned and his castle burned to the

ground. "You see," said his father, "punishment always follows bad actions. A wicked man cannot prosper; for he is like the grass growing beside the old castle. It must wither and die. The old tower that still stands up there, serves as a monument to justice, for this and all future times."

CHAPTER II

THE FOX

One day, Niklas drove his goats toward the stone bridge. While the frisky animals nibbled at the shrubbery, he sought pastime by gathering beautiful colored pieces of mineral here and there. All at once, he heard a singular whine. He looked about him and discovered a young fox down in a deep hole. It had fallen off the steep rock and was vainly trying to clamber up the sides.

Niklas was moved to pity for the dumb animal, and reached for something that would serve to help him rescue it. He found a piece of a fallen tree, and using it as a ladder, he slipped down the tree trunk to the dangerous hole where the unfortunate fox had fallen. He took the animal under one arm, and with the other managed to cling to the old stump. Thus he brought the fox back to safety. He then carried it to his home in order to show it to his father.

"Oh," shouted his sister, as Niklas entered the room, "what a queer dog you have!"

"That is a young fox," said the father, "only a few months old. The poor creature looks thin and half starved. How did you get it?"

Niklas related the adventure and felt proud that he had succeeded in rescuing the poor thing.

"I am not surprised that it is hungry," said his father, "and I am very glad that you took compassion on it."

His mother then supplied the fox with food and drink. It ate greedily.

"You may keep the fox and train it," said his father. "It will increase the members of this household by one head; but there is always something to spare for a little pet."

The fox was cunning enough to be punctual at its meals, and ate everything apportioned it. It kept close to the house, as if it owned it. Its best friend was Niklas, who cared for it faithfully. The fox became very much attached to him, romped with him, and followed him like a dog wherever he went.

But soon it displayed its thievish nature by stealing a chicken and secretly eating it out in the shrubbery back of the house. Mrs. Brenner accidentally came upon it and caught it swallowing the last mouthful. She cried in disappointment at the loss of the bird, and complained bitterly to the father, who said: "That fox shall not live in this house any more."

On the following day the smith from a neighboring village came for a wagon load of charcoal and took a fancy to the fox. "My children would have no end of fun, if they owned a fox like that,"

said he. As Niklas knew that he should not be permitted to keep the fox any longer, he took this opportunity to give it to a man who seemed fond of it, and what was worth considerably more to Niklas, gave proof of being a kind-hearted, good-natured man.

The smith promised to bring Niklas something in exchange for the fox on his next visit, and tying a rope around the fox's neck, led it to the wagon. The poor animal looked back repeatedly and went very reluctantly with its new master. Poor Niklas stood in the doorway, his eyes brimming with tears, and watched his fox, his best companion, leave him forever.

"Let him go!" said his father. "It serves him right. Every thief deserves punishment."

CHAPTER III

THE TOWER

Niklas tried to forget his fox, but he found it a difficult matter. He satisfied himself at last that at any rate the fox would receive kind treatment in his new home, and soon it would be just as well off as ever.

The goats were led daily to their favorite haunts, especially to the stone bridge. One day Niklas wandered over the bridge. When the time arrived for returning, he missed a goat. He searched about in every possible nook and corner, and clambered up the steepest places.

"Perhaps," said he, "the goat has wandered up to the ruined castle and has lost its way behind the old walls."

Suddenly a great desire possessed him to look at the castle, the wonder of that region. 'Tis true he remembered his father's injunction, but he thought, "It can't be so dangerous. I'll only stay a minute." When Niklas reached the castle, he wandered around the moss-covered walls, and the fallen stones and weeds. Big trees had grown on this heap of ruin. He gazed wonderingly at the mighty tower, whose lofty top had been destroyed and was now overgrown with ivy. Then

he made his way through a small gate that opened into the large tower. Here, too, he found nothing but brush-wood. Immense stones lay about partly concealed by the moss. He shuddered as he gazed at the desolation.

“Truly, my father was right when he said: ‘The wicked cannot stand; they wither and fall like the grass about these deserted walls.’ ”

An icy chill crept over him and he was about to go. Just then, the tall weeds and leafy branches swayed and nodded toward him. There came a dreadful crash, the floor moved under his feet, the bushes, the stones and the floor sank—and he fell with them into an opening as deep as a well.

Niklas, half paralyzed with fear, gazed at his dungeon horror-stricken. In his fall, however, he had sustained no injury and he was able to move about; but to his dismay he saw no exit except the moss-covered, slippery walls which he could not climb. The fear of death now took possession of him.

Toads and snakes, that had made their homes in the crevices of the stone wall and had fallen at the same time with Niklas, crawled and hopped about him. All this doubled his fear. He shouted from time to time for help, but in vain. His voice only died away between the high walls.

Wringing his hands and gazing at his surroundings, he cried: “No one knows that I am here. I did not heed my father’s warning. Never again

in my whole life will I disobey, if only I am restored to my people!"

Darker and darker grew the night; and in the sky a little star faintly glimmered here and there. The pale moonlight that shone through the crevices and window openings lighted the gray walls only dimly. Hollow noises and moaning cries echoed from the solitary walls. Black forms swayed to and fro up in the high tower. Niklas could not distinguish them, but they increased his fears and made him shiver. He closed his eyes and cold perspiration stood on his brow. All the frightful stories that he had ever heard about the place swept through his mind with lightning rapidity.

In fear and trembling, he passed half the night. At last soothing sleep crept over the poor, tired boy and he rested till the morning light. When he awoke and saw the leafy vine on the high tower glistening in the sunshine, his heart felt lightened. Repeatedly during that day, he sent forth loud cries for help, but they died away in the distance and remained unanswered; and from sheer exhaustion he again fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORM

A dreadful storm aroused Niklas. It was dark, for heavy clouds had rolled across the heavens. The wind raged furiously and howled through the tower, and many a loose stone fell from the walls with a loud crash. The trembling boy was no longer sure of his life. He now feared that the other walls would tumble upon him. He fled to a far corner of the ruins. The lightning flashed so vividly, that for a moment the tower seemed to be on fire; and the thunder shook the very foundation. Suddenly, the rain fell. Niklas caught some water in his hands and quenched his thirst. When the lightning and the thunder ceased, dead silence again hovered over all. Suddenly the frightened boy heard something creeping around near the edge of the vault, and it seemed, too, as if he heard the rattling of a chain.

“What can this be?” thought Niklas. “I feel more frightened each moment.” Then the sound died away. All at once, something scratched on the other side of the wall near which he sat. He jumped up and ran to another corner. But the unknown object worked its way under the wall and leaped at Niklas. He sent forth one cry after

another. Then the lightning flashed again, and Niklas saw before him—his faithful fox.

Fear was now converted into joy. The fox crept up to him and rubbed against him, rolled over his feet and then bounded about joyously.

“You good fox,” shouted Niklas, “so you are that dreaded form I so feared. How welcome you are! Yes, yes, you have not forgotten that I once saved you from an awful pit. How wonderful of you to come to me in my distress. I know you would gladly rescue me, if you could.”

Niklas felt better now that he had a friendly living form about him. All fears seemed suddenly to vanish. He sought a dry spot and seated himself upon it, and the fox lay down at his feet.

As the morning light broke over the earth, Niklas said: “I must see where that fox entered, perhaps I could get out that same way.” He searched, and near the ground in one corner of the prison found an opening. This had been covered by the recent fallen debris and the fox had just dug it open again. Niklas pushed some of the dirt to one side, and found a narrow passage. He ventured into it and felt his way, step by step, and thought, “Will it ever end?” At last he came out into the broad daylight.

How he felt, when he emerged from the dark passage and found himself in a free, open space,

with the glorious sun shining overhead, words fail to express. He hurried on, as fast as he could with the fox at his side, all the time saying aloud: "How thankful I am for my escape."

CHAPTER V

THE INSTITUTION

In his father's house great sorrow and fear had been constant guests since his absence. Father, mother and sister had searched that night for him, but all to no purpose. No one had thought of going to the ruined castle, because the father had always forbidden such a thing. They feared that he had slipped into an abyss or into the rushing mountain stream.

As they sat talking over their great loss and the accident that must have befallen Niklas, he opened the door and stepped into their midst.

All screamed at once: "Oh, we thought you were dead! What a shock you have given us. What happened to you and where did you get the fox?"

When the excitement had subsided, the father said to Niklas: "Tell us where you stayed so long; for something dreadful must have occurred to detain you." But his thoughtful mother said: "I think Niklas had better wait until he has eaten some food." Later, he gave a detailed account of his imprisonment and peril; how he had cried and prayed, hungered and thirsted.

"Yes," said his mother, "necessity teaches us humility."

As Niklas continued to describe the dark hole and the swaying forms in the tall towers, Thecla cried: "Oh, don't tell any more; it makes me shiver. I should have died of fear." But her father said: "Don't be silly; those forms were only night owls. Go on with your story, Niklas."

"I think," said Niklas, "that my fox wanted to free me from my prison, just as I saved him."

"That," said the father, "may not have been his object but, at any rate, even if the fox be considered an unreasoning creature, he had feeling for his benefactor, and when he scented your steps, he followed them."

"Yes," said Niklas, "then I followed his steps and was rescued"; and with that he passed a part of his meal to the fox.

The father spoke kindly, yet earnestly, to Niklas, and said: "I warned you never to visit the ruined castle, because I knew that some mishap would occur there. I forbade you so strongly, but you did not obey my fatherly warning. Do you not see what dreadful consequences result from such disobedience? It was the cause of your falling into that dungeon, where you almost died. In the same way, many people have wrought their own misfortune and ruin, not only for the present, but for all time, by the heedless, thoughtless breaking of a command. I trust this dreadful

experience may serve you as a warning the rest of your life."

Early the next morning, the smith called at the hut for another load of coal. As he spied the fox, he cried: "I thought I'd find him here, and I've brought a new, strong chain with me, so that he will not break loose again."

Turning to Niklas, he said: "I never paid you for that fox, so, now I will give the promised present, one gulden."

"No, no," cried Niklas, "I wouldn't part with that fox for a thousand guldens." Then he told the smith what wonderful service the grateful fox had rendered him.

"Well, well," said the smith, "I don't blame you, if you want to keep such a fox, and I will add to my gulden this brand-new, strong chain; for if your mother hopes to keep her poultry, you will have to chain your fox." So saying, he gave his two gifts, jumped into the wagon and drove off.

The next day the father escorted the family across the stone bridge up to the old castle, to get a view of the dreadful prison where Niklas had spent two days. With fear and trembling, they looked at the ruin, and were truly grateful to God for His care of their boy. While they stood gazing, they heard voices. Turning, they saw the smith with a number of villagers to whom he had told the story of what had befallen Niklas.

Their curiosity getting the better of them, they had all decided to visit the spot and look once more at the remains of the old castle, the home of the detested duke.

As soon as they caught a glimpse of Niklas, they hurried to him and questioned him about his adventure; and soon he was the center of an admiring group.

"Show me the hole where the fox entered," said the smith, "I'd like to go in myself and have a good look at the old tower."

With his father's permission, Niklas pointed out the place.

The smith entered the passageway, and all the villagers followed. When they reached the cellar, they looked about curiously. Suddenly, the smith spied an iron door. It was so rusty, that it fell to pieces at his touch.

"See!" cried he, "what I have found." They all ran to the spot; and, sure enough, the door had fallen in fragments and lo! there lay many bags. Taking his pen-knife the smith ripped a hole in the old cloth and with one yell they all shouted: "Gold! Gold!" Yes, the robber's gold had been found. The men rushed out to tell the news to the Brenners.

"So we see," said Rupert, when he heard all about it, "the duke couldn't take his money with him. We must immediately tell the authorities that we have found the stolen goods."

“No, no,” shouted the villagers. “The smith found it, and it belongs to him.”

“Oh, no,” said he, “I would rather that the poor people about here should each have a share, for every one suffered at the hands of this wicked duke.”

The news flashed like wild fire from one to another, till the whole village and all the country around was electrified by the report.

After the authorities had been notified and the smith had relinquished claim to the money, a vote was cast, and it resulted in the verdict that the money should be used for the erection of a large institution, to be built in the capital city, for the care of the blind.

In the course of time it was completed; and here the sightless members of humanity were housed and taught the lines of work for which they showed an aptitude.

The history of the ruined castle was never forgotten; but the good which the accumulated money did for the afflicted ones softened, in a measure, the memory of the wicked duke.

THE MIDNIGHT HOUR

CHAPTERS.

- I. EDNA'S CHILDHOOD.
- II. THE CAPTIVE.
- III. SEPARATION.
- IV. IN THE WOODS.
- V. THE NEW ENTERPRISE.
- VI. IN SERVICE.
- VII. THE VISIT.
- VIII. FREEDOM.



“It was particularly hard for Edna to leave these good people.”

THE MIDNIGHT HOUR

CHAPTER I

EDNA'S CHILDHOOD

On the southern border of Swabia, in a picturesque region of flowering vales and wooded mountains, behind which the snowcapped Alps rise in dazzling splendor, there stood, in ancient times, the beautiful castle of Randenburg. Knight Egbert lived here with his family. He was noted for his gallantry and although his chosen calling demanded of him the wielding of his sword and lance, yet he was gentle and mild, and under his iron coat-of-mail there beat a heart full of tenderness and sympathy. The Duke of Swabia honored him with his friendship, and the King had distinguished him above all other knights.

Knight Egbert found little opportunity during those restless, warlike times to be at home with his family. In the intervals of his absence, his wife busied herself with her household cares and the education of her only child, a girl of twelve, named Edna. The good, pious mother implanted in the heart of her daughter, a love of God and His creatures. Even though her father was so

seldom at home with them, Edna loved both parents equally well.

Often her mother would say to her: "Try to do your very best, so that I may be able to please your father with a good report of you." On the father's return from his tiresome journeys, mother and daughter would vie with each other to give him pleasure and make his home a place of rest and peace.

The mother was in the habit of helping the poor with food and money; but many of these donations reached the needy ones through the hands of her daughter, for she wished Edna to learn and understand the blessedness of giving.

"How happy we are in our work," said Edna to her mother.

"Yes, my child, this happiness is the fruit of our industry. We have had no time to be idle and mope and grieve. Work is the very best thing for us all."

One day, the Duke of Randenburg paid them a visit. Many knights and their wives accompanied him. Edna was dressed elegantly, according to her station, and wore many costly jewels. She was greatly admired for her beauty, and the flattery was very welcome and pleasing to her.

Just as soon as the guests had departed, the mother called Edna to her side and said: "My child, I am very much disturbed by the praise which was bestowed upon you this night. Did

our friends find nothing to praise in you but your attire and your brilliant jewels—which were only hung about you and which you must now remove? The weaver and the jeweler alone deserve this praise, not you. They admired your face and figure whose beauty must some day vanish. Oh, if that were all they could find to praise in you, I should be a most unhappy mother. Strive for those qualities which will lead you to true honor. What are all these trinkets compared to a noble heart? Such praise as you received could not make me happy. Worthy sentiments and good deeds alone are the only jewels which have any value.”

But, alas, Edna was not to enjoy the fortune of keeping so good a mother to train her and shield her from harm and sorrow. When she had reached her fifteenth year, her mother suddenly became very ill. Recognizing that the end was near, she called her daughter to her, and said: “Send a mounted messenger at once to your father. I wait to see him before I die; and summon our good clergyman who has been my guide during my whole life, and who will still gently lead me, as I take my steps toward the better world. It is a comfort to me now that I have all my life tried to do my very best.”

When the clergyman arrived, he said a few words to Matilda and then prayed over her. Like

a ministering angel, Edna remained faithfully at her mother's bedside.

On the third day Knight Egbert returned. Deeply agitated, he entered the room. The sight of his emaciated wife gave him a great shock and his grief was uncontrollable. Matilda quickly offered him her right hand and the other she gave to her daughter.

"My dear husband," she said, in a weak voice, "my hour has come. I shall not see the dawn of another day; but weep not." Then, after a moment's silence, she continued: "Behold our daughter! I tried to train her to be pious and dutiful. Finish my work; improve upon what I have begun."

"You, my dear child, you have given me much joy. You have been a good daughter. Oh, remain good and true. Honor and love your dear father. Be to him, in his old age, an affectionate, dutiful daughter."

Father and child were convulsed with tears.

The mother then folded her hands. She became paler, her eyes closed and her soul departed.

CHAPTER II

THE CAPTIVE

Knight Egbert had again gone to war. One day in late autumn, he returned severely wounded in the right arm. Edna was much concerned and sympathized with his suffering. She helped him daily, binding his wound, feeding him with delicacies, reading to him from his favorite books and talking to him about her mother; and thus the hours of an otherwise weary winter passed quickly.

In the first bright days of the spring, there came to the castle a noble old man, named Branton, who had been sent with a message from the Duke asking Egbert to return to the field of battle.

To his great sorrow, however, Egbert was not able to respond to the call, owing to the weakness of his wounded arm, but he offered to send his men. At the end of the week, he assembled them and exhorted them to fight bravely under the leadership of his friend, the Duke.

With many regrets, he saw his men march through the gate, and deplored his inability to accompany them. The day seemed long and his

quiet castle deserted. Sad and dejected, he seated himself at the open fire.

The night was chilly and a dreadful storm raged and howled around the castle towers. Edna put more wood upon the fire, brought her father some hot lemonade, seated herself at his feet, and said: "My dear father, tell me about that Mr. Branton who called this afternoon. I know that he once lived here in our castle, and his daughter, Anna, was my playmate; but I should like to know more about him."

"Tell you all about my brave Branton?" asked the Knight. "With pleasure! Branton had a reason for calling to-day, and he well knew how badly I should feel at being left behind. He often accompanied me on long expeditions.

"But—before I can tell you concerning the brave Branton, I must relate to you a few things concerning Knight Cunard, of Fitzburg. His massive fortress is not unknown to you. We can see it from our windows, with its mighty towers projecting far above the majestic trees. You have never seen him, for he has been my enemy as long as I can remember, and of course never visits here. His hatred and jealousy toward me began many years ago when the Duke showed a preference for me. Then, too, in a shooting contest, I chanced to win the first prize. From that time on his hatred grew apace.

"It happened, one day, that my good Branton killed a deer on the outskirts of my property, adjoining the woods belonging to Knight Cunard. In revenge, Knight Cunard and his men captured Branton and dragged him through the woods.

"When Mrs. Branton came to me for assistance, I hurried toward Knight Cunard's castle with my men, in the hope of overtaking Branton's assailants.

"As we followed, in hot pursuit, we reached a tavern, where, to our surprise, we saw standing at the door, a cart upon which my worthy Branton was securely tied. While Knight Cunard and his men were within carousing, we untied the helpless Branton, rescued him and galloped back to our castle.

"How happy I was, for it gives unbounded joy to have been of assistance in saving the life of another.

"Soon after, I gave Mr. Branton a patch of my land, far enough away from Cunard's castle, so that there would be little occasion for the two men to meet."

It was growing late now, and Edna hastened to replenish the fire. Suddenly a dreadful noise sounded from the portals. The arched vestibule echoed the rattling of swords and the shouts of men, and heavy steps approached their room.

Knight Egbert sprang to his feet and seized a weapon, while Edna locked the door. But with a

dreadful crash the door was broken open, and an armored man with his attendants stood before them.

"Egbert," said he, his eyes blazing, "this is the hour in which I wreak my vengeance. I am Knight Cunard, whom you have so often insulted. Now you shall suffer for it."

Turning to two of his henchmen he shouted: "Chain him and watch him while we plunder his castle. The dismal dungeon of Fitzburg shall hereafter be his home. This castle is now my property."

Edna threw herself at the feet of this cruel knight and implored him for mercy; but he thrust her from him and left the room without noticing her. Knight Egbert was chained, and two men stood guard at the door.

Cunard had taken the opportunity when Knight Egbert was alone and unprotected, to attack him, having first received help and instruction from a treacherous servant of Knight Egbert. Thus it happened that he had gained entrance into this impregnable castle, and had made a prisoner of Knight Egbert in his own fortress.

CHAPTER III

SEPARATION

Chained and dejected, Knight Egbert sat before his expiring fire, while Edna, weeping, kneeled beside him. She seemed stupefied. The noise of the plundering could be heard all through the castle. Edna raised her eyes and said: "O father, to think that they would chain the hands which were always so ready to help and your poor, wounded hand at that." Her voice failed her and she burst into tears.

Egbert at length broke the silence, and said: "Control yourself, my child, and dry your eyes. This trial has been sent to us by God. We are in His hands, and contrary to His will, no harm can befall us. In the past I relied on the King and the Duke, but they are now busy with other affairs. I trusted to stones and iron, to walls and locks, but now I rely only on God.

"But soon we shall have to part, my dear Edna," he continued, and he tried to embrace her, but the chains were too heavy.

"Oh, don't speak of parting, my dear father," said she, throwing her arms around his neck. "They shall not take me away from you. I will go with you into your prison."

"No, my dear Edna," said her father gently, "Knight Cunard would never give ear to such a proposition. Once more I say, we must part! Listen to my advice. Hurry from this castle, before you are taken into captivity. You are from now on a poor girl; for this castle and all it contains will be seized; but do not give up hope. There are other more valuable things of which no calamity can rob us. I mean goodness, innocence and tenderness. These were the riches your mother possessed; and, if only they remain to you, you will be rich indeed.

"As soon as you leave this castle, go directly to the home of the honest Branton, the woodman. There you can live in quiet concealment; and should you be forced to live under his lowly roof for years, or even for your whole life, remember that in a hut, even more than in a palace, one can live contentedly.

"Be ashamed of no work, however humble. The callous spots on the fingers of the industrious hand merit more respect than the jewelled fingers of the idle. Should you be forced to take the sickle in your hand, remember that noble thoughts can transmute into gold the lowest work or the commonest tool. Be good; preserve your innocence. Should my last hour come in my lonely cell, with no human eye to gaze with tenderness upon me, no human ear to hear my last words, no human hand to gently close my eyes, there would

still remain to me, in that last hour, the comfort that I leave behind me a good daughter. Take this badge of mine, which I once received from the hands of the King. Perhaps, when I am no longer with you, it may help you prove that you were a descendant of Knight Egbert. Now promise me that you will do all that I have asked of you."

"Oh, I will do everything," cried Edna, "all, but one thing! I cannot leave you. Perhaps my pleas may move Knight Cunard to pity."

Suddenly a loud noise arose in the hall, and many men pressed into the room where Edna and her father were seated. Edna clung to her father, and begged that she be permitted to accompany him, but she was rudely torn from his side.

Her father was then led below to the outer court and placed in an old cart. Shouting and laughing hilariously, the men proceeded with their plunder and their poor, innocent captive toward the castle of Fitzburg.

The way was steep, so they proceeded very slowly. Edna ran beside the horse on which Knight Cunard was seated and begged to be allowed to go with her father; but no attention was paid to her. At last, tired and exhausted, she sank upon the ground, while the procession moved on and was soon lost to sight.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE WOODS

Edna, who rarely left the castle grounds, now found herself lonely and grief-stricken on a strange road. She crept under some bushes to spend the night.

As the day begun to dawn, she left her hiding place and looked about her. Deep in the forest, there rose to view two high pine-covered peaks. Knowing that the woodman's house was situated between these she hurried in that direction. After wandering about for an endless time, she heard in the distance a thud repeated at regular intervals. It seemed to her as if it might be the woodman's ax. She seated herself upon the grass for a long time and listened. At last she heard some whistling, and soon a song greeted her ears.

"That is the woodman's voice," said she. "It comes from the distance. I will follow its sound and perhaps I may find him." So she hurried on and on, and his voice seemed ever nearer and nearer. At last she reached the spot, and was indeed, grateful to find him.

"But, how did you come here, at this hour and alone?" said he. "I must hurry you back to your father or he will grieve over your absence."

"My father!" cried Edna. "Oh! don't you know what has happened?"

"Your father!" cried the woodman in alarm. "What has happened to him?"

"Knight Cunard took him prisoner last night."

"How could Cunard enter such an impassable fortress?"

Edna seated herself beside the woodman and told him the details of the capture.

"Now, now, my dear child," said the woodman, "don't weep so bitterly. Your father will be delivered from his bondage. I would go through fire and water for his sake. Let me conduct you to my house, and my wife and daughter will provide you with such comfort as our humble home affords."

After many a steep ascent over stone and brambles, they came to a turn in the path, and there stood the little low-roofed cottage. The sight of it made her feel brighter and more hopeful.

"Perhaps, some day, my father will be led out of his sad plight, into the bright, free, open world again, just as this rocky road has led us to this peaceful home," said Edna. In the days that followed, her new surroundings delighted her more and more and she felt thoroughly grateful to these good people for their kindness and protection.

She tried in every way to conceal her sorrow. But as the days lengthened into weeks, and the

weeks into months, the weight of her grief pressed more heavily upon her. The only conversation in which she found interest was relative to her father and his freedom.

One day, the family sat at the table, enjoying the mid-day meal, and the talk was as usual upon the one absorbing topic, Count Egbert. The meal was almost over, when a little dish filled with mushrooms caught the woodman's eye. He had gathered them especially for Edna and wished her to have the benefit of his efforts. He passed the dish, and urged her to take the mushrooms, at the same time saying: "We really care very little about them, but the rich people in the castles around here regard them as a great luxury. I used to deliver them at your castle, and another woodman supplied the castle of Fitzburg. The gatekeeper's wife, however, was so disagreeable, that the woodman declared he'd never visit that castle again."

Edna, who had listened quietly, sprang to her feet and cried in joy: "I have it. That's what I will do. I'll dress myself as a peasant, and carry mushrooms to the castle of Fitzburg. Then, if the gatekeeper's wife would employ me as a servant, I might yet be able to see my father."

She begged to be excused and hurried from the room. When she returned, she stood before the family dressed in Anna's clothes and in everything save her complexion and delicate white

hands, presenting a complete picture of a peasant girl.

The woodman was anxious to help her in every way possible; so he made a mixture of herbs and rubbed it over her face and hands, thus giving the skin the brown, tanned look natural to a peasant. In the afternoon he gathered a large quantity of mushrooms for her, so that she could take them on the morrow.

Early the next morning, Edna was ready to start on her journey, with Anna as her guide. The woodman and his wife bade them good-bye and watched them till they disappeared in the distance.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW ENTERPRISE

The two girls soon emerged from the woods and seated themselves on a stone. When sufficiently rested, Edna arose to go, while Anna promised to wait there for her return.

Edna had not gone very far when the high turrets of Knight Cunard's castle loomed up in the distance. Her heart seemed pierced with anguish as she pictured her father lying in a dark cell beneath this castle. "What is he doing now, I wonder? Is he well? Have sorrow and want worn him? Is he living? Oh, I hope I may succeed in helping him."

She was near the castle gate now, but she seated herself on the grass in order to quiet her restless fears. Two children came toward her and stopped to look at her. She greeted them kindly, and gave them each a pear. Soon the three were engaged in a friendly chat.

They were the gate-keeper's children, and as the old man gazed from his window to see what was going on without, he was pleased to find his children so happy in this peasant girl's company. As he came toward the gate, Edna approached him, opened her basket and offered to sell him some mushrooms.

"How much do you want for them?" he asked.

"What would you be pleased to pay?" questioned Edna. "For I think you would not pay a poor girl too little for her trouble."

"Well said," replied he. "Wait here, while I carry them into the castle and try to sell them for you. It is a long time since we have had any, and I am sure these will be purchased."

He took her basket and left her seated at the door.

Soon the gate-keeper's wife appeared and said: "Who are you, that you dare seat yourself at my door? What do you want here? Hurry on."

The two children pleaded for Edna and showed their mother the fruit she had given them. Just then the father returned with the empty basket and the money.

"Now, now," said he, "don't be so hasty. This is a real nice girl, and I was just wondering if she would like to be a servant in our house. If you are so cross, no one will like to stay with you. I myself offered her this seat."

"Well, that explains it. You must forgive me, my child, but it is our duty to watch the gate."

"I am sorry," said Edna, "that I have caused this misunderstanding, but I beg your pardon."

This pleased the gate-keeper's wife. As long as no one contradicted her, she was perfectly satisfied. Then she said: "You must stay and

have dinner with us. Come in and seat yourself at this table."

Edna gladly accepted, but the children kept her so busy talking and answering questions, that she hardly found time to eat.

The mother was more and more pleased each moment with Edna's friendliness. When the time came for Edna to go, the children clung to her, and cried: "Stay, stay with us."

"It would please me, too," said their mother. "Wouldn't you like to be with me in service?"

"Oh, with all my heart," said Edna. "I would serve you so faithfully."

"Very well," said she, "but first return to your home and tell your people. If it suits them, then return to me in a week."

She gave Edna some food to take home in her basket, stipulated the amount of money she would give as wages, and bade her good-bye.

Edna thanked her heartily and hurried along toward the woods.

Anna was sitting there, still knitting, anxiously awaiting Edna's return. "Let us hasten," said Anna, "for it is growing late and we must get through the woods before twilight. You can tell me all that happened, as we hurry on our way."

Half-way through the forest, they met the woodman and his wife, who had worried over

their delay, and had come to meet them. The good people were overjoyed that everything had gone along so well, but they were grieved at the prospect of losing Edna. As they left the woods the moon rose in all its splendor and lighted the pathway to their quiet home.

CHAPTER VI

IN SERVICE

The following week was a sad one for the woodman's family. It was particularly hard for Edna to leave these good people and this friendly atmosphere in which she had lived so happily; and especially to exchange it all for a home in the castle of an enemy. She knew, too, that she was going out to a service in which she would meet with many hardships. But, out of love for her father, she entered upon the difficult work with resignation.

At the end of the week, the Brantons accompanied Edna through the forest; and with many good wishes and not a few tears, they bade her good-bye.

The gate-keeper's wife received Edna kindly, and said: "I am pleased that you have kept your word with me." She then gave her instruction as to what to do.

"I will do my very best," said Edna, "to please you in every way." And true to her promise, she served her mistress with the same diligence not only while she was watched, but at all times and in all places. She found her position a very difficult one to fill, for her duties taxed her beyond her strength. Having been brought up so

tenderly, she was entirely unaccustomed to such hard, rough work.

From early morn till late at night she drudged. Ofttimes she received no encouragement, no kindly word, only rebuke. At night, when she sought her bed, she would cry: "All this hardship will I bear gladly if, at last, it earns for me my father's freedom."

Edna had now been employed in the gate-keeper's home about one month, and still she had had no chance to see her father. It grieved her all the more keenly to know that she was so near to him and yet could be of no service to him. She had noticed that the gate-keeper was also the prison warden and took food to the prisoners. She questioned him from time to time concerning them. In that way she learned at least that her dear father still lived. Ofttimes she begged the warden to let her see the prisoners; but he only shook his head, and said: "You must not be so inquisitive."

Edna could hardly repress her tears when she saw the prisoner's meagre fare served in the old earthenware dishes. "What I suffer is a trifle, compared to what my father must endure. From now on I will regard my trials as nothing."

One night as the food stood ready on a tray for the prisoners, the gate-keeper said to Edna: "Come with me to-night and I will show you the prison; for to-morrow, I must accompany the

knight on a long journey. From now on, you must bring the prisoners their meals, because this is a duty which my wife thoroughly dislikes." He then led the way through a long, dark passage.

This opportunity was most unexpected for Edna. Now she could see her father. Although the prospect gave her joy, yet it was mixed with fear. With trembling and palpitating heart she followed the gate-keeper. She mastered her feelings quickly and resolved that in the presence of the gate-keeper, she would not recognize her father.

Several other prisoners were there besides her father, but at last the gate-keeper stopped, and said: "This is the only cell which we may enter. This is a good man, quiet and gentle. He is Knight Egbert of Randenburg."

Poor Edna would scarcely have recognized her father, he was pale and thin and had so long a beard. His clothing was soiled and torn. He sat upon a stone seat to which he was fastened by a chain, long enough to permit him to walk about the cell. A table which had been cut from a huge rock stood in the center of the cell. An earthen mug and a piece of dry bread lay upon it. A pallet of straw stood in one corner. A little window carefully barred, let in a few rays of light.

"Knight," said the gate-keeper, "to-morrow I must leave with my master; so this girl, who is our servant, will bring your food."

Knight Egbert surveyed Edna. Her appearance reminded him somewhat of his daughter, but the cell was so dark that he did not recognize her.

"My own daughter," said he, heaving a deep sigh, "is about your age. I wish I could learn something about her. She was such a good daughter. My dear," said he, turning to her, "I trust you will be as good as my Edna."

Poor Edna, who had controlled herself thus far, now gave vent to tears. Her heart was breaking. She wanted to embrace her father, but she dared not.

Egbert was surprised to see her so agitated, and said: "Have you lost your father lately?"

Between tears and sobs, Edna told him that her father was separated from her.

"Well," said Egbert, "I trust you may find him soon. You certainly have a very tender heart, dear child."

"That is true," said the gate-keeper, "entirely too tender. Don't cry so much, or I cannot let you fill my place."

Egbert looked at Edna with sympathy and said: "Bear up, dear child."

Edna kissed his hands and her hot tears fell upon them.

It was well that the gate-keeper motioned her to leave, for she could not have braved another moment of this ordeal.

CHAPTER VII

THE VISIT

Edna passed the rest of the night in anguish of heart. The pale face of her dear father and his chained hands were ever present to her mind's eye. But the hope that she could tell him soon that she was his Edna, lightened her burden.

Late that night, she was awakened by the gate-keeper's wife, who wished her to prepare a meal for her husband, who was about to leave. As soon as he had partaken of the food, he bade them good-bye, swung himself upon his horse, and was off. The bridge was again drawn up and the gates securely locked. Edna bade her mistress good-night and retired to her room. Here she waited till all was again still. Then, creeping stealthily out into the hall, she took the prison keys, and with the light of a lantern sought her father's cell.

Egbert started in surprise at her entrance.

"What do you wish?" asked he.

"Forgive me," whispered Edna, "for disturbing you, but I see that you, too, have not been sleeping. I wish to talk with you alone. That is why I come here at this late hour."

"Oh, my child," said he, "this is a very dangerous thing for you to do."

"Don't fear," said Edna. "All the members of the household are wrapped in deep sleep. Not without thought and prayer, do I enter here. My way has been directed. Your grief over your daughter has pained me so much, that I cannot sleep on account of it, so I have come to bring you news of her."

"From my Edna?" asked he quickly. "If that were so, my dear child, you would be as welcome as an angel. Tell me, tell me, do you know her? Have you seen her? Speak, speak!"

"I can give you positive news of her," said Edna. "See! Do you recognize this badge and chain?"

"Yes, this is a badge of mine which I gave her when we parted. But you must know her very well, for she promised me to keep it always."

"She did not give it into strange hands, my dear father," cried Edna; "for I am Edna, your daughter."

"You?" cried Egbert in astonishment. Then, gazing at her long and tenderly, he cried: "Oh, yes, now I see you are my daughter. Come to my arms."

She embraced her father and their tears mingled.

"Tell me, how did you get here?"

Edna then related all the events that had occurred during their separation.

Her father looked at her and said: "You are not the happiest daughter, but you are the best in the world. Remain good and true, and you will be happier than if you were exalted to a throne!"

Edna promised her father to follow all his advice and bade him good-night. She extinguished her lamp and hurried out of the room, for the rooster had sounded the break of day.

Early that morning, her mistress said to her: "Edna, I purpose taking my two children on a visit to my mother. This trip will give me the change that I need so much. I will not return for two days. You may rest yourself to-morrow, but don't forget to feed the prisoners." On the following day, bright and early, mother and children started forth.

Who was happier than Edna? She thought of no rest. Now she could visit with her father for one whole day. She had been busy many lonely hours of the nights, during the past month, making clothing and knitting stockings for him. Now the time had come when she could present them to him.

But first she hastened with food to all the prisoners and a good breakfast it was for them. Then she brought fresh straw for her father's bed, washed his cell and cleaned the window. Later, she brought him clean apparel and hot

water for a bath, so that the poor, old man felt refreshed and happy.

With its clean walls, brightened window, and fresh sand-strewn floor, the cell seemed like a different place.

"How lovely it is to be clean," said the father. "A handful of sand and a little water, together with a little care and work, have changed this sombre cell into a bright one."

The hours passed like moments and the time had now come for Edna to retire. Rejoicing over the benefit she had bestowed upon her father, she bade him good-night.

In the course of the week, news was brought to the castle that Knight Cunard had been seriously wounded and lay sick in a distant castle. His wife could not visit him because she was not well.

Edna learned this from the gate-keeper's wife, also, that she would be needed occasionally at the castle to help care for Arnold, Knight Cunard's son.

One bright morning, Arnold was strolling through the grounds. Suddenly there arose a cry of alarm that brought Edna rushing to the scene. To her horror she saw Arnold struggling in the waters of the moat.

"Hurry," said Edna to a servant, "help me." Seizing a long stick, she scrambled down to the edge of the moat, and with both hands clutching the stick she reached out toward the boy. She

made many ineffectual attempts and it seemed as if they would be in vain. At last she succeeded. The boy seized the stick with the tenacity of death, and Edna, almost losing her balance, drew him to safety.

The other servant then took the child to his mother, while Edna hurried back to her household duties. At the first opportunity which offered, Edna hastened to her father to tell him what had happened.

"You have won the greatest victory," said he. "You conquered yourself and did good to an enemy's child. You have shown far greater heroism than any knight who kills his enemy in battle; for you have saved a life. But do not let this fill you with false pride. The courage and the opportunity were sent you by God."

CHAPTER VIII

FREEDOM

Arnold's mother rejoiced over his rescue. "This angel who saved my child must be summoned at once," said she to her lady-in-waiting, "for I wish to thank her. This deed shall not pass unrewarded."

Modest and blushing, Edna appeared before her. The mother took Edna in her arms, kissed her affectionately, and said: "How many thanks I owe you! What a noble deed you have done! What joy you have given me! Demand of me what you will; and if it be in my power, it shall be granted to you."

"Well then," said Edna, "I take you at your word; but give me time to consider." She bowed graciously and left the room.

That afternoon, the old butler appeared before Knight Cunard's wife, and disclosed to her the fact that each night, Edna visited one of the prisoners, with whom she held long conversations.

"I fear," said he, "that she is plotting his escape."

The Knight's wife was greatly surprised at this disclosure, and said: "To-night I will watch and

listen at the door of the cell, and then I shall know how to act."

At midnight, she stationed herself in a dark corner of the dungeon and awaited Edna's coming. Then she stepped to the prison door and listened. All that she heard was good and kindly advice from the lips of a loving father to a dutiful daughter. Deeply affected, Knight Cunard's wife hurried back to the castle. Sleep never visited her eyes that night. Pain and astonishment swayed her heart.

"This girl is Knight Egbert's daughter," said she. "In order to be near her father, she has taken a position of drudgery. This girl, the daughter of a man whom we hold in chains, has rescued my child. This man has taught his child to think and act so nobly. What good thoughts must actuate his life. He shall have his freedom, this noble upright man. He shall have his castle and goods restored to him. This worthy father and his devoted daughter shall have the happiness which they have earned. Oh, that it were in my power to release him at once! This very night, however, shall end his imprisonment, and not many days hence he shall enter his own home again."

Early the next morning Edna appeared, as usual, in the castle chamber.

"I have learned," said her ladyship to Edna, "that you feel great sympathy for one of our

prisoners and that you show him much consideration. This pleases me, and I wish to praise you for it. I, myself, will supply you with fruit and other delicacies for him." Edna was highly elated with this kindness.

Meanwhile the Knight's wife impatiently waited her husband's return. At last, he came, accompanied by his men. After the customary salutations had been exchanged, and the Knight had seated himself at his wife's side, she related the accident that had been so miraculously averted by Edna, at the same time explaining to her husband the relationship between Edna and the prisoner.

"I hope you rewarded her," said the Knight, "for we owe her a very great debt."

"I have left that for you to do, for at the time, she did not accept what I offered."

"Well then," said he, "call her before me at once."

Edna quickly responded. The Knight greeted her warmly, and said: "I owe you my thanks, for without your help I would have been an unhappy father. Ask of me what you will, and you shall have it."

Edna said softly and with maidenly modesty: "I do not ask for any reward, only give me justice. Restore to me my father, Knight Egbert, and return to him his castle of Randenburg."

“Gladly will I do this for you, and I confess to you my deep contrition for all my shameful acts.”

In the course of a few days, Knight Egbert and his devoted daughter, clad in befitting attire, bade farewell to the members of the castle of Fitzburg, and returned to their own home, grateful to God for their deliverance.

THE END

